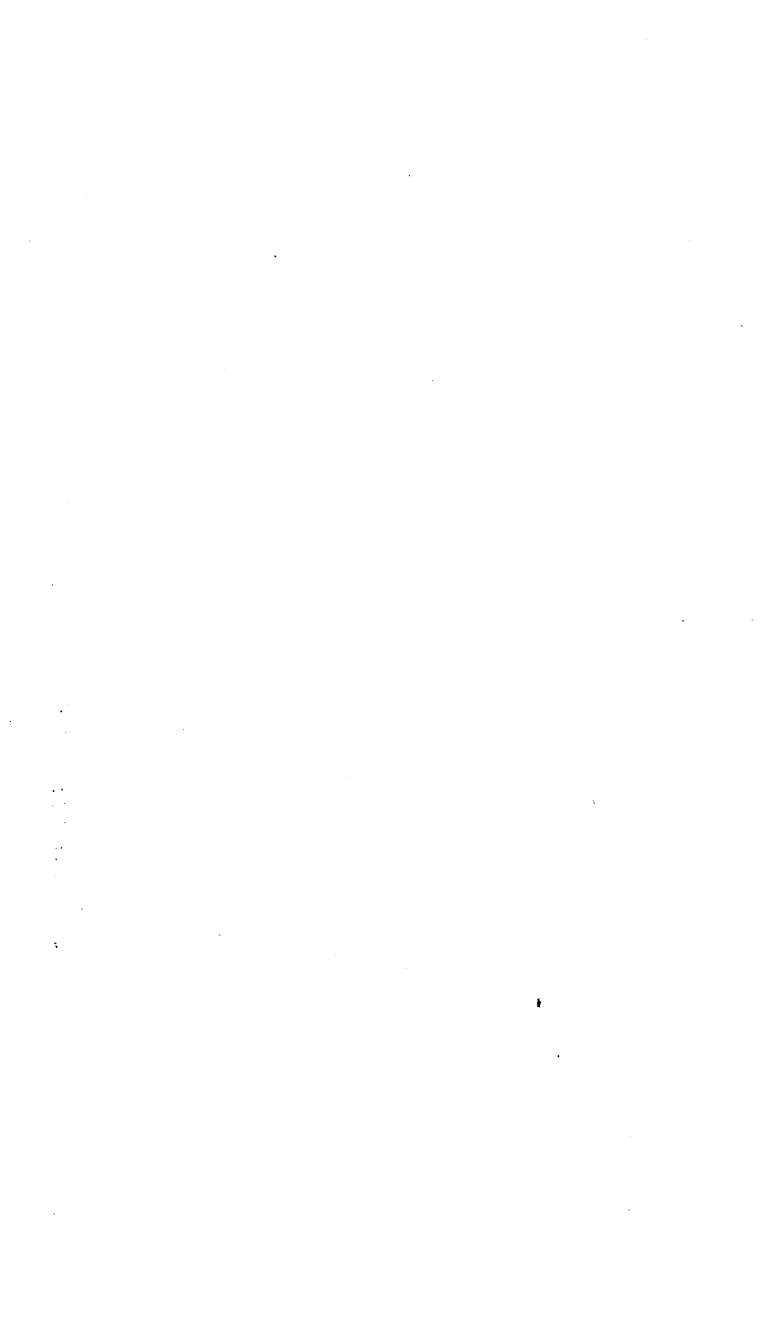


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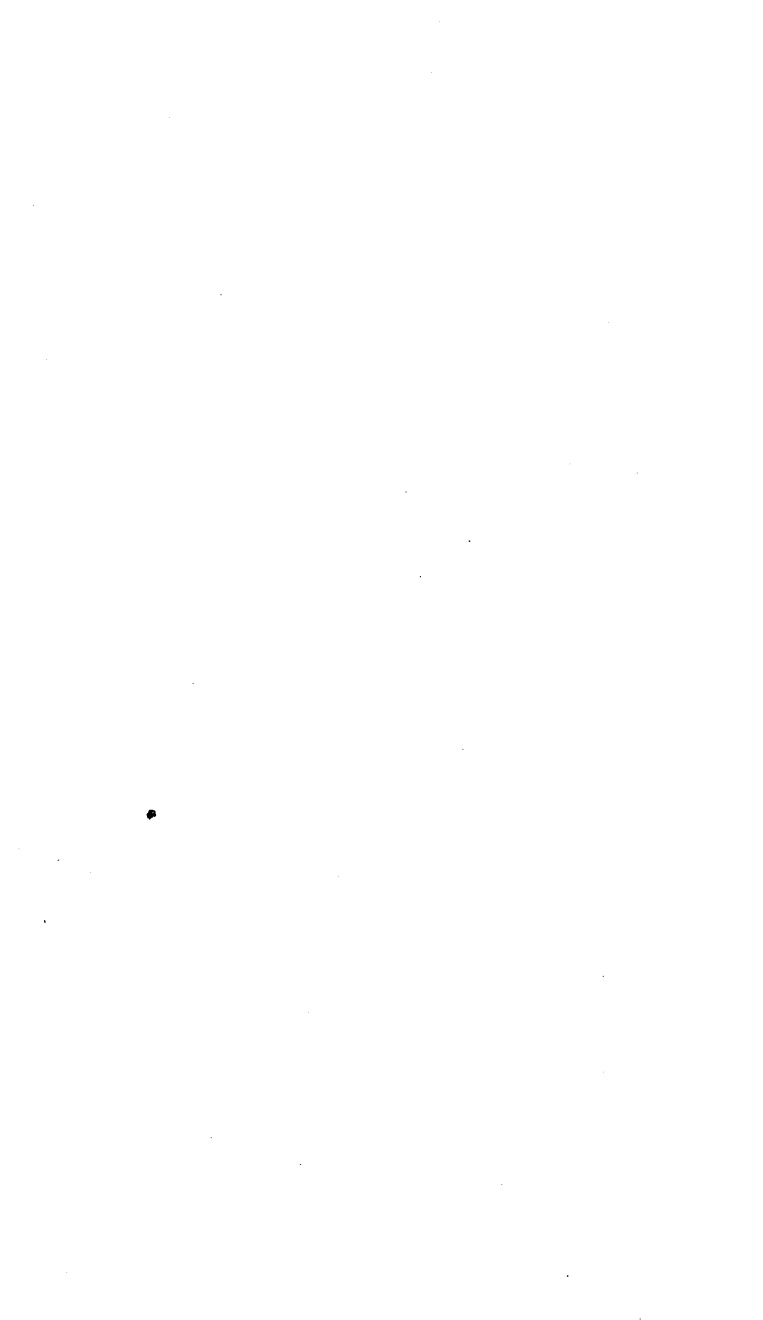
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**THE NATURE OF  
RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE**



# THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

BY

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TO  
PROFESSOR-EMERITUS G. F. STOUT





## PREFACE

IN the following essay on the nature of religious knowledge I have begun with the believer's judgments concerning God ; have rejected various theories of knowledge which do not seem to me to be capable of explaining these judgments ; and then, adopting an epistemology which I am convinced accounts for our knowledge of the physical world and of one another as embodied selves, have tried to show that this epistemology also provides an adequate explanation of what the believer thinks and says about the Divine Being.

The method employed will justify, I trust, the considerable amount of space devoted to what at first may appear to be purely historical matters. These historical matters are the facts to be explained, and that is why I have begun and ended with them.

I cannot say how much I owe to Professor-Emeritus G. F. Stout for the instruction which I received from him when I had the privilege of being one of his students, and for the kind encouragement which he has given me ever since. I am also much indebted to the other thinkers from whose works I quote, and not least to those with whose views I have felt myself bound to disagree.

NORMAN MACLEISH

FORRES, 10th November 1938.



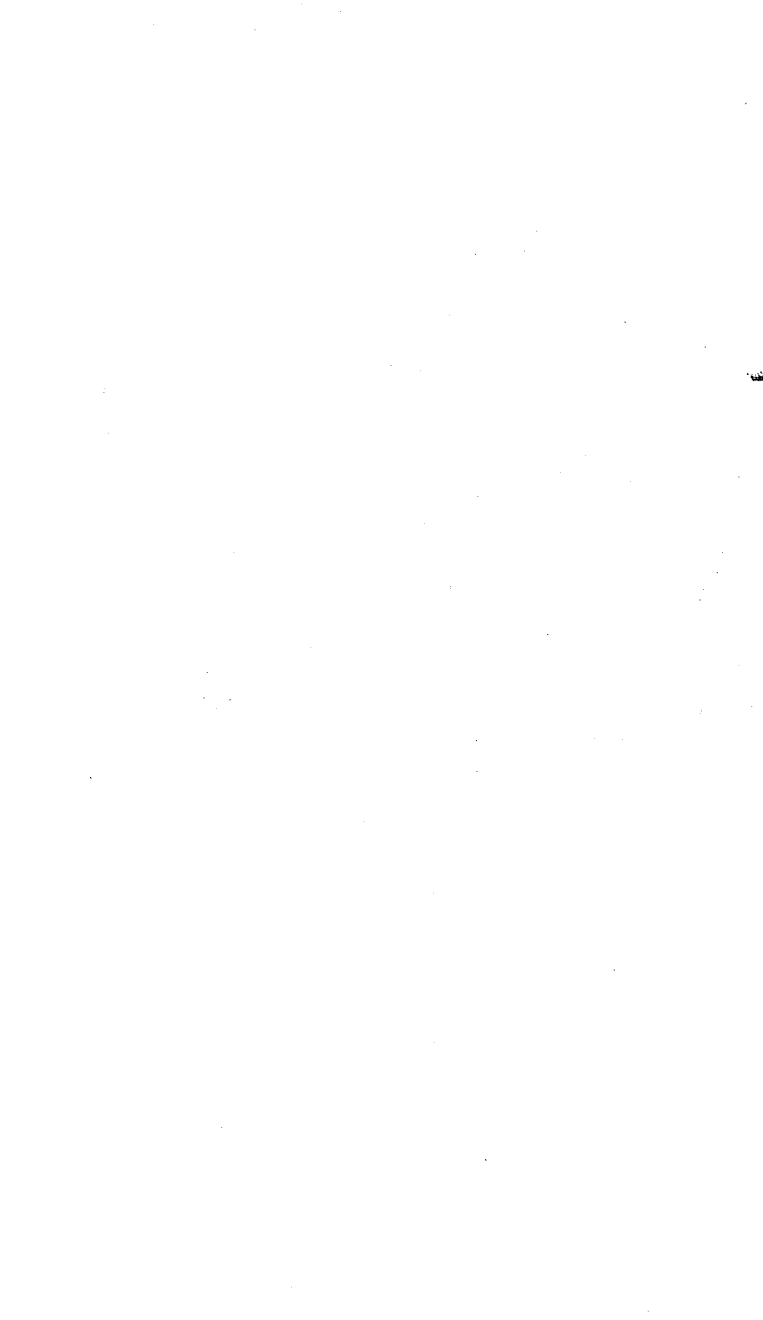
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# THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### THE PRIMA FACIE MEANING OF A RELIGIOUS JUDGMENT

##### I. FUNDAMENTAL CONVICTION OF BELIEVERS

WHETHER he does so explicitly or only implicitly, the Christian invariably claims that in some measure he knows Whom he believes.<sup>1</sup> To suggest to him that his faith in God is a mere wish for God's existence, is to evoke the reply that his faith is founded on fact. Whether he is justified in doing so or not, he habitually assumes that he partially apprehends the being, nature, and will of God.

The point emerges clearly in connection with what has been called the Christian's recognition of his duties as divine commands. For example, when the Christian says that God bids him speak the truth, he does not mean that he *wishes* to speak the truth or that he *likes* to do so ; he means that, irrespective of his feelings and desires in the matter, he is under an obligation to speak the truth, and that his obligation to do so is grounded in the will of God. Thus, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel,"<sup>2</sup> he did not

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 16.

thereby express his love of preaching as an occupation which he had found to be conducive to his personal comfort or profit. Indeed, long before he wrote to the Corinthians, Paul had found that preaching the gospel forced him to submit to imprisonment, scourging, and the danger of death. But he was driven to act and suffer as he did by the conviction—rightly or wrongly founded—that, as a matter of fact utterly independent of his attitude to it, God laid upon him the task of declaring to his fellow-men the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ.

A similar consideration applies to those statements in which the Christian makes assertions, not about God's will, but about His nature. For example, when the Christian affirms that God is love,<sup>1</sup> he does not intend to express a personal wish or hope concerning God and His nature which would not be contradicted by a corresponding wish or hope on the part of a neighbour that there be no God at all. He means that God actually exists, that His essence is love, that He is not characterised by hate or indifference, and that anyone who asserts anything to the contrary is in error.

The assumption which is thus made by the Christian that he can pass religious judgments expressive of his knowledge of God, is made likewise by the Jew, the Mohammedan, the Hindu, and many others who believe in their own particular ways in the Divine Being. Thus, in the statement that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him,"<sup>2</sup> it is assumed and asserted by the Jew, not that he *likes* to think of God as being pitiful, but that he *knows* Him to be such. If anyone denies the truth of the Jew's proposition, no doubt the Jew may agree that conceivably he is mistaken in asserting what he does, and that conceivably his inter-

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. ciii. 13.

locutor is right ; nevertheless, the issue raised is taken to be one concerning a matter of fact which is independent of the personal preferences of both parties to the discussion. Either God is a God of pity, or He is not. There is no debate about merely subjective feelings, hopes, or wishes.

## 2. CONTRADICTIONS

Now, it is a commonplace that the religious judgments passed by the Christian, the Jew, the Mohammedan, the Hindu, and other believers in God are in many cases utterly irreconcilable with one another. For example, the Mohammedan's estimate of Jesus Christ as one of the prophets of God inferior to Mohammed who is "the seal of the prophets,"<sup>1</sup> is inconsistent with the Christian's estimate of Jesus Christ as God's only-begotten Son. Again, when the Hindu speaks of redemption as the recognition of the identity of an unknowable self with an unknowable Deity,<sup>2</sup> or says that God, being without motive or desire, has not created or "arranged" the world in the spirit of love,<sup>3</sup> he asserts what the Christian flatly denies. Nay, the Christian often differs from his fellow-Christian both as to the practical details of duty interpreted as the will of God and as to fundamental matters of doctrine.

Such facts immediately suggest the possibility that the religious judgments passed by believers, instead of expressing genuine knowledge of God, are illusory. From this point of view, Jung roundly asserts that God is merely the name which we give to the longings of our own souls.<sup>4</sup> But if what is said by Jung and by others similarly minded demands thorough-going investigation,

<sup>1</sup> Kuenen, *Hibbert Lectures for 1882*, p. 30. Sura, 33. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Cave, *Living Religions of the East*, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> See below, Ch. IV.



at any rate it is unnecessary to meet the demand now. All that need be observed at the moment is that, however irreconcilable some religious judgments may be with others, their being so does not prove that there can be no valid religious judgments at all. Men make mistakes in their perceptual judgments, yet no one supposes that therefore their perceptual judgments are merely the descriptions of their subjective processes, and that they are wholly incapable of asserting true propositions concerning the external world. Again, men do not always agree as to what is right and what is wrong, without thereby being shown to be altogether unable to pass valid moral judgments. And similarly, since spiritual things are spiritually apprehended, and since men differ in their powers of spiritual apprehension, the fact that they vary in their religious judgments as in others is only what is to be expected. The point which demands attention in the first instance is that wherever there is anything which we can call religion, there we are confronted with religious judgments concerning a Reality external to and independent of those by whom the judgments are passed, and those judgments are the facts which call for explanation by the religious thinker. It is not his business to cast doubt on their validity, but if possible to account for them as valid. After all, the reason which we employ in making assertions about the nature of God is the same reason as that which we employ in making assertions about anything else; so that the more doubt the theologian casts upon the validity of his neighbours' religious convictions, the more he undermines his own position. He cannot cast doubt on their ability to think truly about the Divine Being without at the same time casting doubt on his own ability to say anything about religion which is not also untrue.

## 3. TRANSITION TO THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Passing from the facts which call for explanation in any theory of religious knowledge, we find that the attempts to explain the facts are legion. For our present purpose, however, we need not try to review such attempts exhaustively. In order to lead up to what will be maintained later as to the nature of religious knowledge, it is sufficient to examine representative expositions of those epistemologies which stress respectively the cognitive, the affective, and the conative aspects of consciousness. This will help to clear away preliminary difficulties and also to bring out the positive clue to a satisfactory theory of religious knowledge which lies in the fact that not cognition only, but also feeling and willing are integral arts of the religious consciousness.

The theories selected as representative of their respective types are the theories of Descartes, Schleiermacher, and Jung. As the first two do not profess to deny the objectivity of religious judgments, they will be treated with comparative brevity. But Jung's attempt to show that religious judgments are wholly illusory, being a denial that there is any such thing as genuine religious knowledge, will be examined at greater length; for it is only when we have definitely established the point that there is a certain quantum of religious knowledge to be explained and not merely to be explained away, that we are justified in trying to construct a religious epistemology at all.

In general, the various views examined will be first of all expounded in their respective exponents' own words—partly because every thinker who deserves serious consideration is his own best interpreter, and partly as a safeguard against the temptation to dismiss views with which one disagrees by the easy method of not dealing with them in their native strength.

## CHAPTER II

### THE THEORY OF DESCARTES

ACCORDING to Descartes there are certain thoughts or ideas belonging to the nature of the mind, which, if first of all we take the trouble to make them clear and distinct so that they contain no inherent contradictions, we can assert to be true. This holds good of religious judgments as well as of others. Our religious judgments are expressions of essentially *a priori* knowledge.

#### I. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD *A PRIORI* KNOWLEDGE

In order to see how Descartes arrives at this theory of religious judgments, it is simplest to begin with his method of systematic doubt.

The method is adopted in the hope that, rigorously used, it will reveal something or other which is indubitable. And this, says Descartes, it speedily does. For the systematic doubter soon discovers that though he may doubt the existence of stars, sun, moon, and his own body, nevertheless he cannot get away from the fact that in doubting their existence he exists as a conscious being. "If I have the persuasion," he says, "that there is absolutely nothing in the world, neither minds nor bodies, am I not therefore persuaded that I do not exist myself? Far from it. I assuredly exist, since I am persuaded. Even if there is a malignant demon possessed at once of the highest power and deepest cunning who is constantly employing all his ingenuity in deceiving me, nevertheless I exist since I am deceived; and, let him deceive me as he

may, he can never bring it about that I am nothing, so long as I shall be conscious that I am something. . . . I am a thinking thing ; that is, a thing that doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses ; that imagines also, and perceives." <sup>1</sup>

We may concede to Descartes his certainty of his thinking while he thinks. We may concede to him also his certainty that he is a thinking being. But if we make this latter concession, we must add at once that the two certainties are not of the same kind. Descartes' certainty that he is a thinking being is indubitable in so far as there can be no thinking which is not the thinking of a being who thinks ; but the being who thinks, as distinguished from his momentary thoughts, is not existentially present to his own consciousness. Thus he is not certain of his nature as a thinking being in the way in which he is immediately certain of the existence of his momentary thoughts. On the contrary, there may be much in his nature as a thinking being of which he is quite uncertain. For example, he may be uncertain whether he is a simple, persistent entity involved in all his momentary thoughts as their unifying principle, or just that unified system of his momentary thoughts which exists in so far as there is consciousness of unity in what is thought of. And if—as follows—all that Descartes is certain of concerning himself as a thinking being is that he must exist as such because no thought can exist without a thinker to think it, ought he not to admit that he has a corresponding certainty concerning an external world of which he thinks? Logically, there is no difference between these two certainties ; for, as we have seen, though the thinker may make mistakes about the nature of the world of which he thinks, he may also make mistakes about the nature of

<sup>1</sup> Meditation III, p. 105, Veitch's Translation.

himself as a thinking being. Nay, neglecting such thinking as occurs in abstract mathematics and confining ourselves to Descartes' problem concerning knowledge of external reality, we may go further and say that just as a malignant demon possessed at once of the highest power and deepest cunning who is constantly employing all his ingenuity in deceiving the thinker, can never bring it about that the thinker is nothing so long as he thinks, so the demon can never bring it about that, so long as the thinker thinks, there is nothing external to himself of which he thinks. There is at least the *apparent* reality of which he thinks; otherwise, he could not even be deceived about its actual existence and nature.

Though Descartes ought to admit that thinking implies the existence of an external reality thought of no less than it implies the existence of someone who thinks, as a matter of fact he does not make this admission. All he says is that among his thoughts there are some which are, "as it were, images of things";<sup>1</sup> but these images of things or "ideas" are conceived by him as being contained within the confines of his own mind. And since they are liable to be erroneous, he goes on, as soon as they are referred to anything beyond his mind, he raises the question whether he can find any ground for being assured that any of his ideas are "like or conformed to the external things of which they are representations."<sup>2</sup>

Descartes finds no assurance that any of his mind's ideas are like or conformed to the things external to it, until he becomes persuaded that God exists; that God, being good, cannot have implanted in His creatures a faculty which is in itself deceptive; and that, therefore, if we take the trouble to rid our inborn ideas of all confusion and indistinctness, we may assert that all that is

<sup>1</sup> Meditation III, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 118.

clearly and distinctly conceived concerning the external world is true. Even God, it is true, cannot create a finite being capable of advancing in knowledge who is not liable to fall into error. But Descartes' point is that, no matter how often he falls into error as he advances in knowledge, through the goodness of God his errors can never be wholly beyond detection by him, never utterly incorrigible. The essential function of the faculties with which God has endowed him, must be to give him valid knowledge of the external world.

It is just here that Descartes states the theory which is of special interest in the present connection : namely, the *a priori* theory of the way in which we are certain of the existence of God.

Among our ideas, he says, there are some which "contain in themselves, so to speak, more objective reality—that is, participate by representation in higher degrees of being or perfection" than do others. And amongst such is the idea of a "God, sovereign, eternal, infinite, immutable, all-knowing, all-powerful, and the Creator of all things that are out of Himself";<sup>1</sup> which idea has in it more objective reality than those ideas by which finite substances are represented. Now, "the objective reality of each of our ideas requires a cause in which the same reality is contained not simply objectively, but formally or eminently. But the objective reality of our idea of God is not contained in us either formally or eminently; nor can it be contained in any other except in God Himself. Therefore this idea of God which is in us demands God for its cause, and consequently, God exists."<sup>2</sup>

As to the way in which the idea of God is received

<sup>1</sup> Meditation III, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Demonstration of Proposition II, Appendix to *Meditations*, p. 271.

from Him, Descartes asserts: "I do not draw this idea from the senses, nor even is it presented to me unexpectedly, as is usual with the ideas of sensible objects when these are presented to the external organs of the senses; it is not even a pure production or fiction of my mind, for it is not in my power to take from or add to it; and consequently there but remains the alternative that it is innate." <sup>1</sup>

## 2. CRITICISM

(i) The ontological proof of the existence of God as stated by Descartes, says the Dean of St. Paul's, Dr. W. R. Matthews, "has the appearance of a *tour de force*, of a sudden jump, even of a piece of intellectual legerdemain. This appearance is justified. There is in fact a leap. A distinction is assumed between that which is 'in thought' and that which is 'in reality,' and it is alleged that in the case of one idea, and only one, the two realms are brought together." <sup>2</sup> They are brought together by applying to the idea of God the principle of causality. But, granting Descartes the principle of causality, we must ask whether or not from his own special point of view he has a right to apply the principle of causality to this particular idea.

In a causal order such as is presented to us in the material world, so far as we can trace it, we find some at least of the conditions which constitute the cause of an event persisting into their effect and being themselves thereby modified, ceasing to exist in their initial form. But Descartes does not state or even suppose that God, in putting the idea of Himself into our minds, persists into that idea and is thereby changed in His own character. The sort of "causation" which he has in mind here, is

<sup>1</sup> Meditation III, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> *The Purpose of God*, p. 21.

indeed the sort of "causation" called in question in his initial doubt, the "transcendent causation" involved in the fact that we cannot think of an object as existing externally to ourselves without there being something external to ourselves to think of. To this sort of "causation," however, Descartes has no right unless he is prepared to renounce his initial doubt. If, as he says to begin with, the thought of an object may be in the mind without the object thought of being presented to the mind from the sphere of reality beyond and independent of it, why should not even the thought of God be in the mind without God Himself existing independently of the mind to give rise to it? In using the principle of causality to prove that the idea of God requires God Himself as its source, Descartes really—though only implicitly—departs from his fundamental position that the mind is a self-contained entity, and thereby admits what we have argued that he ought to admit, namely, that just as thinking implies the existence of a thinker, so it implies the existence of a reality external to the thinker of which he thinks. That is to say, the attempt to explain our knowledge of God as an *a priori* or innate possession of the mind breaks down. Knowledge is never separable from external reality; it is always external reality being known.

(ii) A further objection to Descartes' theory of religious judgments lies in the fact that it does not explain the nature of the growth of men's knowledge of God. According to him, advances in this knowledge have been made as men have deduced progressively the implications of their initial conception of God as a Perfect Being; but, as a matter of fact, men have not begun with a clear and distinct idea of God as a Perfect Being and then won their most advanced notions of Him merely by hard



thinking. They have begun with very vague and often false thoughts of God, and have learned more and more about Him through a growing experience of His judgment and mercy in their daily lives. "The word of the Lord has been unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little,"<sup>1</sup> culminating in the Word made flesh. Thus to John and Paul, God is always a holy and almighty Father; but this idea is not for them a necessary truth of reason, attained merely by hard thinking. "It is a truth which has broken upon their minds through a particular Person Who had a particular career, and to the end it will depend for its vital force on Him Who first mediated it to the world. . . . Further, this thought is still a living thought. Of it, supremely, Goethe's words hold true, that we inherit it only as we win it for ourselves. It is only in Christ's company, face to face with One Who knows Himself to be the Son, that any of us can learn freshly how to think of the Father."<sup>2</sup>

Descartes, of course, does not specifically deal with the point at issue. "I do not refer to matters of faith," he says,<sup>3</sup> "but only to what regards speculative truths." It is only fair to say, however, that if his general theory does not explain the actual growth of religious knowledge through deepening religious experience, and if in particular it does not explain the unique knowledge of God attained by the Christian through his laying hold of the revelation of God given in Jesus Christ, the theory is at fault. No doubt by the innate idea of God Descartes means merely a mental modification which, existing in the mind antecedently to all experience, possesses, however, only a

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxviii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> H. R. Mackintosh, *Christian Apprehension of God*, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Synopsis to *Meditations*, p. 94.

potential existence, until, on occasion of experience, it is called forth into actual consciousness.<sup>1</sup> So far, it is possible to argue for him that he allows for gradual growth in the knowledge of God, not by way of deductive thinking, but through deepening religious experience, and particularly through laying hold of the historical facts concerning Jesus Christ. But, if this argument is advanced on his behalf, it may be replied that for Descartes the validity of the ideas which are adventitious to the believing mind, is assured only if he can rely on his proof of the existence of God as One Who cannot utterly deceive His creatures, and his proof of the existence of God as such an One—as already urged—is itself invalid. It must be concluded, therefore, that on *a priori* principles it is impossible to explain our religious judgments as true propositions concerning the Divine Being Who exists externally to and independently of us ourselves.

### 3. POSITIVE RESULT

Descartes' theory of religious judgments is of great value for us in two ways.

First, it shows us that in attempting to construct a religious epistemology we must beware of beginning by conceiving knowledge in general as an innate possession of the mind, so that from the outset knowledge and reality are distinct and separate entities. If we begin by conceiving them as distinct and separate entities, there is no way of bringing them together again. In particular, there is no way of bringing our thoughts of God together with Him Himself as One Who exists externally to and independently of us. Our starting-point must be that from the outset knowledge and reality are inseparable, that knowledge is always reality being known.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Veitch's Notes on Descartes' *Meditations*, p. 287.

Second, Descartes' theory of religious knowledge reminds us that part of our task in constructing a religious epistemology is to account for our particular apprehensions of God's nature and will. It is true that while the Cartesian statement of the ontological proof of God's existence is invalid as it stands, it may be made valid by simply re-stating it without Descartes' initial assumption of a separation between thought and reality. But even so, the ontological proof of God's existence does not supply us with an account of the concrete growth of men's knowledge of God.<sup>1</sup> It only supplies us with proof, when the validity of men's particular apprehensions of God's nature and will is called in question, that their specific religious judgments have a rational basis. And we need something more than this if we are to explain the origin and development of these specific religious judgments themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the argument of Dean Matthews in the first chapter of *The Purpose of God*. He sums up by saying that each of the traditional proofs of God's existence "presupposes a religious experience and tradition, and is confirmatory rather than exploratory, fortifying the land which faith has already won." *Op cit.* p. 42.

## CHAPTER III

### THE THEORY OF SCHLEIERMACHER

WE turn now to a theory of religious judgments strongly contrasted with the theory discussed in the last chapter ; namely, the theory of Schleiermacher.

According to Schleiermacher, religious judgments refer to objective reality, but only in so far as they propound the implications of a certain mode of feeling common to believers. " Any possibility of God being in any way *given* to consciousness," he says,<sup>1</sup> " is entirely excluded. If we speak of an original revelation of God to man or in man, the meaning will always be just this, that, along with the absolute dependence which characterises not only man but all temporal existence, there is given to man also the immediate self-consciousness or feeling of it, *which becomes a consciousness of God*. God signifies for us simply that which is the co-determinant in this feeling, and to which we trace our living in such a state."

#### I. THE FEELING OF ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE

This view of the nature of religious judgments is part and parcel of Schleiermacher's fundamental principle that " the piety which forms the basis of all ecclesiastical communions is, considered purely in itself, neither a knowing nor a doing, but a modification of feeling " ;<sup>2</sup> which fundamental principle was laid down in the attempt

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Faith*, Sect. 4, 4. (Translated by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 3, 1.

to find a secure basis for faith. After the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, it seemed that human knowledge was purely phenomenal, that men could never know reality-in-itself, and that therefore they could never in any measure at all apprehend God. If there was to be any real religion, Schleiermacher argued, it must have its basis, not in reason, but in feeling; and the particular feeling selected was the feeling of absolute dependence which accompanies all our activity as "the consciousness that our very spontaneity comes from a source outside of us."<sup>1</sup> God was inferred therefrom purely and simply as its necessary and sufficient cause. "As regards the identification of the consciousness of being absolutely dependent with being in relation to God, this is to be understood in the sense that the Whence of our receptive and active existence, as implied in this self-consciousness, is to be designated by the word 'God,' and that this is for us the really original signification of that word. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

The attempt to find a secure basis for faith in feeling, which is of all modifications of consciousness the most variable, is so startling that the question arises whether or not we are to take Schleiermacher's fundamental principle strictly as he states it. May it not be that for him the word "feeling" does not have its usual connotation, and that therefore more is involved in his fundamental principle than at first appears?

It cannot be denied that in his actual procedure Schleiermacher resiles from his initial contention that we are aware of God's being, nature, and will only through reflection upon the implications of the feeling of absolute dependence. For example, when he comes to deal with the antithesis of sin and grace, he says that his former "propositions are in no sense the representation of a

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Faith*, Sect. 4, 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 4, 4.

meagre, and purely monotheistic God-consciousness, but are abstracted from one which has issued from fellowship with the Redeemer";<sup>1</sup> and instead of alleging that this fellowship is primarily a communicating on the one hand, and a receiving on the other, of the feeling of absolute dependence, he adds that "the individual receives from the picture of Christ which exists in the Christian community as at once a corporate act and a corporate possession, the impression of the sinless perfection of Jesus, which becomes for him at the same time the perfect consciousness of sin and the removal of the misery."<sup>2</sup> Here, therefore, as also in other sections of *The Christian Faith*, it seems to be admitted explicitly that the direct "impression" made by the sinless perfection of Jesus is primary, and that the feeling of sinfulness and the feeling of its removal are logically secondary.<sup>3</sup> Theoretically, however, Schleiermacher will have nothing to do with such an admission. He reiterates that the basis of true religion lies in feeling, feeling being sharply distinguished from knowing and willing, and joy and sorrow being instanced as "genuine states of feeling in the sense explained."<sup>4</sup> It is true that "piety is not excluded from all connection with knowledge and doing."<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, "it falls to piety to stimulate knowing and doing, and every moment in which piety has a predominant place contains within itself one or both of these in germ."<sup>6</sup> But, "the assertions that piety is a knowing or a doing or

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Faith*, Sect. 62, 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 88, 3.

<sup>3</sup> According to Schleiermacher, the consciousness of sin is a feeling. "We have the consciousness of sin," he says in Sect. 66, 1, "whenever the God-consciousness which forms part of the inner state, or is in some way added to it, determines our self-consciousness or feeling as pain," and "the consciousness of grace we assume to be similar." Sect. 86, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 3, 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 3, 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 3, 4.

both, or a state made up of feeling, knowing and doing, are opposed,"<sup>1</sup> as also the assertion that "the feeling of dependence is conditioned by some previous—or logically prior—knowledge about God."<sup>2</sup> The cognitive aspect of consciousness functions only in elucidating what the feeling of dependence requires as its cause. "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech."<sup>3</sup> Even the propositions of the science of Christian morals are in the same category, for "the modes of action which they describe under the forms of theorems or precepts, are likewise expressions of the religious affections of the Christian."<sup>4</sup> Contradictions in ecclesiastical formulæ are explained by the fact that "although the original consciousness was the same in all, yet the thought expressive of it takes different forms with different thinkers."<sup>5</sup> When we are at peace with God through the redeeming power of Christ, "our changed relation to God is really an affair of the quiescent self-consciousness looking at itself reflected in thought and finding a consciousness of God included there."<sup>6</sup> Nay, the doctrine of the Trinity itself, since it is not an immediate utterance concerning the Christian self-consciousness or feeling of absolute dependence, but only a combination of several such utterances, may be set aside as irrelevant to Dogmatics. "If success ever had attended, or ever could attend, the attempt to exhibit or prove a Trinity in God from general conceptions . . . still such a doctrine of the Trinity, even though worked out with much greater elaboration than the ecclesiastical doctrine has ever attained or ever could attain, could find no place in a Christian Dogmatic. Deductions of the kind, standing in

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Faith*, Sect. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 4, 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 15, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 26, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 95, 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 107, 1.

no connection with the basal facts of self-consciousness, . . . are of no sort of use in Christian doctrine. We must simply put them aside as 'philosophemes'; nor are we in any way called upon to submit them to criticism."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. CRITICISM

Since Schleiermacher evidently means us to take his fundamental principle strictly as he states it, it is essential to ask if this principle and, in particular, the inference drawn from it concerning the nature of religious judgments, are tenable.

(i) Schleiermacher is undoubtedly right in asserting that faith is not a mere knowing, or a mere doing or willing, or a combination of the two. Feeling is always present in some degree where there is faith, and is sometimes very prominent, as in the sorrow of contrition or the joy of thanksgiving. But to say that faith is "neither a knowing or a doing, but essentially a modification of feeling," is to overstress one aspect of the religious consciousness at the expense of others. The Christian believer's faith is always faith in God, and how does he lay hold on God if not by exercising the only mind given him in the only way in which that mind can be exercised, namely, through acts in which knowing, feeling, and willing are involved in indissoluble unity? "It is clear," says Schleiermacher,<sup>2</sup> "how we must judge the contention that piety is a state in which knowing, feeling, and doing are combined. We reject it, if it means that the feeling is derived from the knowing and the doing from the feeling. And if no subordination is intended, then the assertion might just as well be the description of any other quite clear and living moment as of a religious one."

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Faith*, Sect. 170, postscript.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Sect. 3, 5.



But, if no subordination is intended, why should not the assertion be made of any other quite clear and living moment as well as of a religious one? The difference between any other quite clear and living moment of consciousness and a religious one does not lie in the fact that the latter is "essentially a state of feeling subsequently caught up into the region of thinking in so far as each religious man is inclined towards thinking and exercised therein," whereas the former is not; it lies in the fact that the religious moment of consciousness and other moments of consciousness are concerned with vastly different objects.

(ii) As regards Schleiermacher's contention that religious judgments are only the elucidation of the necessary and sufficient causes of religious feelings, there is the grave—nay, there is the insuperable—difficulty of seeing how religious feelings can arise at all before any object is presented to or apprehended by the religious man. Besides, there is the difficulty that Schleiermacher's theory of religious judgments does not account for the observed facts of the religious man's experience. Does he ever begin with the feeling of absolute dependence, and then go on to argue that in order to explain it he must postulate the existence of a Divine Being as its cause? It is safe to say that the ordinary believer, who makes no claim to be a theological thinker, never does anything of the kind. Genuine faith existed among the early followers of Christ long before the notion of a feeling of absolute dependence as the basis of an inferred belief in God was first conceived, and genuine faith exists to-day among thousands to whom the notion is utterly unintelligible. They do not argue themselves into belief in God by a consideration of what their religious feelings involve, nor do they accept their ideas of God from those who have

carried out such a piece of argumentation on their behalf. They become sure of the being and nature of God through being confronted with the Lord Jesus Christ ; and if, in accordance with His known being and nature, they feel themselves to be absolutely dependent on Him, the feeling is neither logically nor chronologically prior to their judgment that the One on Whom they depend is God. To hold that religious judgments only express the implications of a prior modification of feeling is to hold what is manifestly untrue.

In his *Types of Modern Theology*, Professor H. R. Mackintosh defends Schleiermacher against this particular criticism. "To me," says Dr. Mackintosh, "Schleiermacher appears in the majority of passages, especially in *The Christian Faith*, to mean by 'feeling' a laying hold by the soul of a trans-subjective Reality, supreme over the world. Feeling is indeed an experience on the part of the self, yet one in which the self 'apprehends' not itself but God. . . . For Schleiermacher the constitutive element in religion is a certain felt relation of man to a supramundane Fact or Power ; and in virtue of this the general charge that he is proceeding by the methods of simple psychological empiricism must, I think, be rebutted. We are unwilling to believe that as a theologian he could have run into the fallacy that it is only by way of a causal inference from its own immediately apprehended states that the mind becomes aware of an Object distinct from itself." <sup>1</sup> But Dr. Mackintosh continues, "This is not to deny that on every other page of *The Christian Faith* phrases or statements may be found which lend a real colour to the accusation." He says also that "the crucial question, 'Is feeling for Schleiermacher merely a subjective state, or is it the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 65.

emotionally coloured apprehension normally called faith, grasping a self-revealed God ? ' cannot be answered with any real degree of assurance. To the end his language is equivocal." <sup>1</sup> Hence, though what we have said here may not be a complete account of Schleiermacher's doctrine, we are nevertheless justified in taking precisely as he states it what is at least a very prominent aspect of his doctrine in order to see where this aspect of his doctrine leads us, and what it has to teach us for our guidance in trying to find a clue to a satisfactory theory of religious knowledge.

### 3. POSITIVE RESULT

The manifest inadequacy of Schleiermacher's theory of religious judgments so far as this theory is based on "feeling" in the strict sense of the word, reinforces the point already discovered through our consideration of Descartes : namely, that we cannot successfully explain our religious judgments if we begin by regarding the mind as a self-contained entity. If, as Schleiermacher says, there can be a feeling of absolute dependence without any existence beyond the mind being in any way given to or apprehended by it, <sup>2</sup> there is no way of arriving at God as existing externally to and independently of us ourselves. Nevertheless Schleiermacher is right in insisting that feeling is an integral part of the religious consciousness, and, as we proceed, we must reckon with the fact as a fact having two important aspects.

First, that we should have had certain feelings of our own is essential to our being able to apprehend certain

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> *The Christian Faith*, Sect. 4, 3. "This feeling cannot in any wise arise from the influence of an object which has in some way to be given to us."

features of God's nature, just as it is essential to our being able to apprehend certain features of the nature of our fellow-men. For example, if we had not ourselves immediately experienced joy or anger, we could not think of God as One Who hates iniquity and rejoices over the repentant sinner.<sup>1</sup> But immediately to experience a feeling and to apprehend it as felt are two different things. Moreover, to apprehend it as felt is always to apprehend it as felt in relation to an object of desire or aversion. There can never be a self-complete feeling apart from a distinguishable, but inseparable cognition of that about which the feeling is felt. Hence, in trying to account for our knowledge of God, while we must make allowance for the part played by feeling in the apprehension of His nature, we must never divorce the feeling-aspect of the religious consciousness from its cognitive aspect.

Second, since the believer feels certain feelings in the presence of God—for example, feelings of dependence, unworthiness, contrition, trust, and joy—our theory of religious knowledge must allow for the possibility of such an apprehension of God's nature as accounts for these particular feelings. It is true that, in stressing the feeling of absolute dependence as the essence of piety, Schleiermacher tends to underestimate the importance of other feelings characteristic of the believer in God. But, in stressing the existence of felt dependence, Schleiermacher certainly does not err; and this is a valuable reminder that the existence of the feeling of dependence and the existence of other feelings characteristic of the believer in God require explanation in any satisfactory theory of religious knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. vi. 16-19; Luke xv. 1-24.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE THEORY OF JUNG

SO far it has been maintained that religious judgments do not describe the objective implications of our religious feelings, and that they do not express an *a priori* knowledge of God. To this Jung adds that, strictly speaking, religious judgments (so-called) are not judgments at all. When we assert them, we do not assert true propositions about a Reality existing independently of us ourselves; we simply bear witness to the fact that we construct in God or other so-called Divine Beings an imaginary Object or Objects for some of our desires. "God is our own longing to which we pay divine honours."<sup>1</sup>

#### I. RELIGIOUS JUDGMENTS ILLUSORY

Jung reaches this conclusion about religious judgments by developing in his own way the psychological theories of Professor Sigmund Freud. There is in every man, he says, a fundamental *libido* or life-force "whose significance is wide enough to cover all the unknown and countless manifestations of the 'will' in the sense of Schopenhauer."<sup>2</sup> This libido urges men into physical and mental activities, whereby they seek for satisfaction in life and in no small measure succeed in finding it.

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of the Unconscious*, Part I. ch. iv. p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Part II. ch. i. p. 75. It will be observed that Jung gives the word "libido" a wider connotation than Freud does. It turns out, however, that even for Jung the sexual element in libido is the predominant one.

Now the mental activities aroused by men's libido partly take the form of purposive or directed thinking, and directed thinking reaches its highest attainments in modern science, which is concerned with the external world, and enables us to adjust ourselves to actual conditions "so that the images in our minds follow after each other in the same strictly causal succession as the historical events outside our minds."<sup>1</sup> But, contrasted with purposive or directed thinking, there is also dream-thinking or phantasy-thinking. It, too, is the product of men's fundamental libido; but whereas directed thinking concerns itself with the external world, this latter type of thinking "leads us away from reality into phantasies of the past and future."<sup>2</sup> In employing it, we think of reality, "not as it truly is, but as we wish it to be."<sup>2</sup> "It sets free subjective wishes, and is, in regard to adaptation to environment, wholly unproductive."<sup>2</sup> Further, as directed thinking has reached its highest attainments in modern times, so dream-thinking is characteristic of antiquity. "The directed thinking of our time is a more or less modern acquisition, which was lacking in earlier times."<sup>2</sup>

Having made this distinction between two commonly recognised types of thinking, Jung proceeds to assert that dream-thinking gives us an explanation of the rise of myths and of religious metaphysical ideas. In the words of Freud, "myths correspond to the distorted residue of wish-phantasies of whole nations,"<sup>3</sup> and no distinction is to be drawn between myths and religious doctrines. The latter, like the former, are not the products of directed thinking, but the products of dream-thinking. The

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of the Unconscious*, Part I. ch. i. p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Part I. ch. i. p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Jung, *op. cit.* Part I. ch. i. p. 15.

crudest mythology is on a level with the highest religion in origin and value ; for men can never altogether break loose from thinking not in accordance with objective facts, but in accordance with subjective desires. " Every man has eyes and all his senses to perceive that the world is dead, cold, and unending ; nor has he ever yet seen a God, nor brought to light the existence of such from empirical necessity. On the contrary, there was need of a phantastic, indestructible optimism, and one far removed from all sense of reality, in order, for example, to discover in the shameful death of Christ the highest salvation and the redemption of the world. . . . Should it happen that all traditions in the world were cut off with a single blow, then with the succeeding generation the whole mythology and history of religion would start over again. Only a few individuals succeed in throwing off mythology in a time of intellectual supremacy—the mass never frees itself. Explanations are of no avail. They merely destroy a transitory form of manifestation, but not the creating impulse." <sup>1</sup>

Happily, it is not necessary for present purposes to follow Jung in his detailed attempt to exhibit mythological and religious ideas as products of predominantly erotic desires. It is sufficient to elucidate his main conclusions about God, Jesus Christ, prayer, and morality.

(1) When men and women find life to be unpleasant, he says, instinctively they turn from its harsh realities and wish for better things. The wish makes them dream of a world perfectly controlled by an altogether gracious Being, and although no such Being actually exists, men and women are easily persuaded that He does ; for their desire for His existence awakens in them vague memories

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of the Unconscious*, Part I. ch. 1, p. 15, sqq.

of the consolations and help once given them by their parents, and those vague memories and the pleasures associated with them are mistaken for thoughts of an objectively-existing God and the satisfaction He accords to his creatures. "*Whoever introverts libido—that is to say, whoever takes it away from a real object without putting in its place a real compensation—is overtaken by the inevitable results of introversion.*" The libido which is turned inward into the subject, awakens again from among the sleeping remembrances of the past one which contains the path upon which earlier the libido once has come to the real object. At the very first and in the foremost position it was father and mother who were the objects of the childish love. They are unequalled and imperishable. Not many difficulties are needed in an adult's life to cause those memories to re-awaken and become effectual. *In religion the regressive reanimation of the father-and-mother imago is organised into a system.* The benefits of religion are the benefits of parental hands; its protection and peace are the results of parental care upon the child; its mystic feelings are the unconscious memories of the tender emotions of the first childhood."<sup>1</sup>

(2) Just as men's libido, when thwarted by actual conditions, finds satisfaction through constructing for itself as its appropriate object an imaginary God, so it constructs for itself also manifold beliefs in religious heroes. Osiris, Tammuz, Attis, Mithras, and Jesus are all of the same type; "they, as well as their typical fates, are personifications of the human libido and its typical fates; they are imagery, like the figures of our nightly dreams; they are the actors and interpreters of our secret thoughts."<sup>2</sup> Thus, "of an historical Jesus we know

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of the Unconscious*, Part I. ch. iv. p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Part II. ch. i. p. 74.



nothing, and His religious value is partly Talmudic, partly Hellenic wisdom." <sup>1</sup>

(3) Jung says very little about prayer ; but he says enough to let us see that his view of the nature of prayer is consistent with his view of the nature of God and of Jesus Christ. "Prayer is a wish (libido) directed towards divinity (unconscious complex)." <sup>2</sup> "In other words, when we think that we are adoring God in prayer, we are really reviving the admiration we once had for our parents or other benefactors, and when we think that we are beseeching God's favour, we are really seeking for the satisfaction denied us by the real world in happy memories of the past."

(4) In view of Jung's statements about the illusory nature of all religious beliefs and all prayer, one wonders whether he thinks that religion in general and Christianity in particular have succeeded in conferring any substantial benefits on the human race. Unexpectedly he assures us that they have. For example, he says that Christianity and Mithracism have acted in the past as useful moral restraints upon men's animal impulses,<sup>3</sup> and even at the present day it is better for men to give their libido—in which the sexual element is predominant—a spurious satisfaction in religious beliefs and practices than to return to unbridled licentiousness.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, religious beliefs and practices are mere self-deception for those who are acquainted with the psychological facts concerning them. They ought to be given up by reasonable men for a non-infantile form of impulse-sublimation. "Instead of doing good to our fellow-men for the love of Christ, we ought to do it from the knowledge that

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of the Unconscious*, Part II. ch. v. p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Part II, ch. iv. p. 109.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Part I. ch. iii. p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Part III. ch. v. 142.

humanity, even as ourselves, could not exist, if among the herd the one could not sacrifice himself for the other. This would be the course of moral autonomy, of perfect freedom, when man could without compulsion do that which he must do, and this from knowledge, without delusion through belief in religious symbols." <sup>1</sup>

## 2. SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS

If the above exposition of Jung's views is at all accurate, it is clear that Jung does not attempt to explain religious beliefs and their expression in religious judgments as valid, but attempts to explain them away as wholly illusory. The vital question thus arises whether or not the attempt succeeds. No doubt some of the statements which Jung makes in support of his general thesis concerning the illusory character of all religious judgments, are extremely foolish; for example, the statement that of an historical Jesus we know nothing, and the amazing suggestion that the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity is the triune formation of the male genitals.<sup>2</sup> So far, Jung's wish-theory of religion does not merit serious consideration. At the same time, undoubtedly some religious judgments have been formulated through men's asserting as true what they have merely wished to be true, and this fact suggests the possibility that in spite of grievous incidental errors Jung may be right in the main. Further, his general thesis may be supported by two supplementary lines of argument, not advanced by Jung himself, with which one must at least sympathise.<sup>3</sup>

(1) First of all, to pass over the fact that men's

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology of the Unconscious*, Part II. ch. v. p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Part II. ch. iv. p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> See Canon Balmforth's valuable book entitled, *Is Christian Experience an Illusion?*

religious judgments are often in conflict with their scientific, moral, and æsthetic judgments, it is notorious that believers in God are by no means unanimous in what they say about His character and will. Thus the Jew often contradicts the Christian in his religious judgments. According to the Old Testament, for example, God tempts men to do evil as well as encourages them to do good ; but, according to the New Testament, he encourages them to do good only, and merely *permits* them to be tempted to do evil. Whereas God is conceived by the Jews as bidding men love their friends and hate their enemies, He is conceived by the Christian as bidding men love all alike and hate none. Although the psalmist says that life after death is the woeful and shadowy existence of Sheol, the apostle declares that it is a life of unspeakable glory. Again, just as the Jew often contradicts the Christian in his religious judgments, so the Christian often contradicts his fellow-Christian. Thus the early belief in Christ's speedy second-coming to this earth has been generally discarded by His modern followers, and it is utterly impossible to co-ordinate the respective views of Roman Catholics, Anglo-Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Plymouth Brethren. It appears that, as Jung says, the tenets of religious men are not apprehensions of an objective divine reality, but the products of their varying desires, likes, dislikes, fears, and hatreds.

(2) The same conclusion is suggested by the fact that some of the worst evils recorded in history have been inflicted by religious men on their neighbours in the name of religion. As Canon Balmforth says, " wherever we look among the higher organised religious (to say nothing of the primitive types), there is evidence of narrow-minded obscurantism and other anti-social ignorances,

follies, and crimes, not merely proceeding from men who happen to be religious, but caused by their religion. Human sacrifices, the fires of Moloch, temple-prostitution, devil-terrors, and grovelling fears of all kinds are hideous inhumanities of primitive superstition which have not left themselves without progeny in the more advanced religions to vex mankind and bar its progress. Religious intolerance has been one of the greatest scourges in history. Jewish fanaticism fought against art and Hellenism. The Mohammedans burnt down the great library of Alexandria on religious grounds. Most important of all, Christendom has to answer for a long tale of sins against the advancing spirit of enlightenment. The death penalty for the heretic, however conscientious and upright, was first imposed in the fourth century, to become . . . an organised part of social machinery under the Inquisition. Short of death at the stake, torture, imprisonment, and confiscation were freely employed. Religious wars occupy much of the historian's time, and in France, Germany and the Netherlands there was plenty to give sting to Montaigne's quiet irony, 'it is setting a high value on one's opinions to roast men on account of them.' Protestants and Anglicans were as culpable as Roman Catholics. Luther had no mercy for Anabaptists, nor Calvin for Servetus. Three or four persons were burnt at Norwich in Elizabeth's reign for holding unchristian opinions, and at Tyburn and elsewhere numbers of Roman priests suffered death for their faith." <sup>1</sup> How is it possible to believe that such things have been done by men possessing a genuine apprehension of the character and will of God? It seems that, if there is a God at all, men know nothing about Him, but merely allege that they have His sanction for doing as they please.

<sup>1</sup> *Is Christian Experience an Illusion?* p. 42.

## 3. CRITICISM

The case for Jung and those who agree with him that religious judgments are wholly illusory having now been stated as strongly as possible, it remains to enquire whether or not the case is a sound one. Admittedly, the considerations urged against the general validity of religious judgments are serious; but are they sufficient to make us dismiss as wholly unwarranted the believer's conviction that he knows Whom he believes?

(1) *Contradictions not an Insurmountable Difficulty.*

A. With regard to the contention that the contradictions which exist between many pairs of religious judgments prove that all religious judgments are invalid, Baron von Hügel observes: "It seems clear that the apparently endless variations which exist simultaneously between one entire religion and another entire religion, and even between single mind and single mind, or which show successively in one and the same religion, and even in one and the same mind, indeed that the crude childishness of much that most individuals and most religions think and represent their experience and its Object to be, do not, of themselves, condemn the position that a great trans-subjective superhuman Reality is being thus, variously and even inadequately, yet none the less actually, apprehended by such groups of persons."<sup>1</sup> After all, spiritual things are spiritually apprehended, and as men of different eras and environment differ in their powers of spiritual apprehension, it is inevitable that they differ in their religious judgments. But just as there is no reason to suppose that we have no valid knowledge of the external world because the various theories of scientists and philosophers concerning its constitution are by no

<sup>1</sup> *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 44.

means wholly consistent with each other, so there is no reason to suppose that there is no valid knowledge of God because men often err in trying to describe His character and will. Nay, it is possible to go further than this and assert that the fact that men often err in trying to describe God's character and will, is positive evidence that they are capable of gradually learning more and more about Him. Were their religious judgments a perfectly self-consistent whole, we should reasonably doubt if these judgments expressed any genuine knowledge of God at all. It has been only by a long, slow process of trial and error that men have gained such knowledge as they possess of the natural world ; it is by a similar process that they have gained their partial knowledge of the Divine Being, and the fact that their thinking concerning God has been characterised by much error does not prove that the thinking has been mere dreaming or phantasy-thinking, but that it has been in accordance with the general cognitive development of the race.

B. It has been suggested that there is a parallel between the growth of religious knowledge and the growth of knowledge of other kinds. If this is actually so, there ought to be not only diversity, but also a substantial measure of agreement in what men think and say about God. As a matter of fact, however, so there is. In general, in spite of their differences in spiritual insight, environment, and training, believers are agreed that, however they vary in describing him, there is a Being other than themselves Who is infinite, eternal, and perfectly good. In particular, those who are experts in religion subscribe to the same fundamental judgments. As Inge puts it, "The Saints do not contradict each other. . . . They agree very closely in what they tell us about God. They tell us that they have arrived gradually

at an unshakeable conviction, not based on inference, but on immediate experience that God is a Spirit with Whom the human spirit can hold intercourse ; that in Him meet all that they can imagine of goodness, truth, and beauty ; that they can see His footprints everywhere in nature, and feel His presence within them as the very life of their life, so that in proportion as they come to themselves they come to Him. They tell us that what separates us from Him and from happiness is, first, self-seeking in all its forms, and, secondly, sensuality in all its forms ; that these are the ways of darkness and of death, which hide from us the fact of God, while the path of the just is like a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." <sup>1</sup>

Now, how is this uniformity of judgment concerning God to be explained if not by the assumption that believers apprehend, each in his or her own measure, the same objective Reality ? According to Jung, they are all deluded by subjective wishes for what suits their personal likes and dislikes ; but whereas the personal likes and dislikes of different men vary enormously, faith in God is largely independent of human idiosyncrasies. It is faith in an objective Reality, whether that Reality happens to attract or repel, to encourage or condemn.

To this contention it is possible for Jung to reply that there is a common foundation for faith in the regressive reanimation of the father-and-mother image. But, granting that there is a certain modicum of similarity in the memories of their parents which are cherished by believers, one cannot admit that those common memories form the sum and substance of their common conception of God. If Jung insists that, without justification, but by a colossal blunder, believers do in fact equate God and

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 325-26, quoted by Balmforth, *op. cit.*

their disguised memories of their parents, it is sufficient to retort that it requires more than Jung's assertion to this effect to prove that all believers, including the greatest religious geniuses of our race, are deluded simpletons. He admits that some thinkers succeed in thinking of reality as it truly is, and if they do, "it is impossible to see, for example, why Plato, Aristotle, Leibniz, and Kant, and why again Pheidias and Michael Angelo, Raphael and Rembrandt, Bach and Beethoven, Homer and Shakespeare, are to be held in deepest gratitude as revealers respectively of various kinds of reality and truth, if Amos and Isaiah, Paul, Augustine and Aquinas, Francis of Assisi and Joan of Arc are to be treated as pure illusionists in precisely what constitutes their specific greatness."<sup>1</sup>

C. A further objection to the wish-theory of religious judgments is that it fails to explain the sense of human sinfulness which invariably accompanies faith in God. If, as Jung asserts, God is merely a wish-figure, how does it come about that religious men and women wish for One Who admittedly shames and humiliates them? Were they all melancholiacs, they might do so and find a morbid satisfaction in the process; but once again it is necessary to insist in opposition to Jung that the vast majority of believers are, and have been, healthy-minded; that they admit their sinfulness in the eyes of God only after a sore struggle with their natural pride in themselves; and that they do so because they are influenced, not by their own desires, but by a Being other than themselves who is, in fact, infinitely good.

## (2) *Moral Considerations.*

A. We turn now to the illusionist's argument that since men have often done evil in the name of God, their

<sup>1</sup> Von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, p. 38.



judgments concerning Him—particularly those purporting to assert the truth about His holy will—must be one and all fallacious.

In this connection von Hügel says: "Man's personality, the instrument of all his fuller and deeper apprehensions, is constituted by the presence and harmonisation of a whole mass of energies and intimations belonging to different levels and values; and not one of these can (in the long run and for mankind at large) be left aside or left unchecked by the others, without grave drawback to that personality. Religion is indeed the deepest of energisings and intimations within man's entirety, but it is not the only one; and though through religion alone God becomes definitely revealed to man as self-conscious Spirit, as an Object, as *the* Object, of direct, explicit adoration, yet those other energies and intimations are also willed by God and come from Him and (in the long run and for mankind at large) are necessary to man's health and balance even in religion itself. So also the æsthetic sense alone conveys the full and direct intimations of the beautiful; yet it nevertheless requires for its healthy, balanced functioning the adequate operation of numerous other energies and intimations, from the senses up to mental processes in the man who apprehends the beautiful. Such an at all adequate and balanced development of any one group of energies and intimations, let alone of the entire personality, is of necessity, except in rare souls or in rare moments of ordinary souls, a difficult and slow process. It has been so certainly with ethics and humaneness. It has been so still more with religion."<sup>1</sup>

The point is that though men have asserted—and have acted upon as true—notions concerning the will of God which we now know to have been gross errors, it does

<sup>1</sup> Von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, p. 46.

not follow that in no respect at all have they ever apprehended the altogether righteous One. In recent years—to refer to an analogous case in the scientific sphere—the atomic theory as held by Dalton had had to be revised. Atoms are not the simple, indestructible entities which Dalton supposed them to have been ; they are composed each of a proton and a number of electrons. Nevertheless certain chemical theories which Dalton based on assumptions not known to have been erroneous, still hold good.<sup>1</sup> And similarly, though believers in God have made many mistakes about His will, they may nevertheless have been in possession of some valid religious knowledge. It is true that, on account of the close relation existing between religion and morality, moral defects seriously weaken a man's power to apprehend Him Who is holy. Only the pure in heart can see God clearly. Yet the sins, the crimes, and the follies committed in the very name of religion do not prove that all religion is unsound or even that all the religion of believing sinners, criminals, and fools has been unsound. To rush to the conclusion that because the believer sometimes makes mistakes about the will of God, all his judgments concerning God reflect but the apotheosis of his own passions, is to rush into manifest error. Though the illusionist argument at present under discussion is stronger than any which Jung himself advances in support of his thesis against the general validity of religion, it does not help him.

*B.* What has just been maintained in opposition to the attempt to explain away all religious judgments as illusions, is reinforced by a further observation of von Hügel.

<sup>1</sup> For example, Dalton's theory that in the formation of chemical compounds combination occurs between definite proportions of the atoms of the elements combined.

With reference to the various energies of men which develop concurrently or successively, von Hügel says that "it is important, throughout all these somewhat parallel growths, especially those of ethics and religion, always to compare the conviction, command, or practice, of one time, race, or country, not with those of much later times or of quite other races or communities, but with the (closely or distinctly) preceding habits of one and the same race and community. Thus, in ethics, polygamy should be compared not with monogamy, but with polyandry; and polyandry, again, with promiscuous intercourse. And in all religion the imprecatory psalms and the divine order to exterminate the Canaanites should be compared not with the Sermon on the Mount, but with purely private vendetta. We thus discover that, in many cases which now shock us, the belief that God had spoken was attached to genuine, if slight moves—or to confirmation of moves—in the right direction; and in all such cases the belief was, so far, certainly well-founded."<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that the observation of von Hügel is applicable to the whole of that long indictment of true religion which consists in the history of its evil effects; it helps to relieve the difficulty of believing that men who have been intolerant, cruel, dishonest, obscurantist, and even sensual in the name of God, have nevertheless had some genuine apprehension of His character and will; and, so far, it makes the attempt to explain away all religious judgments as illusions even less formidable than it has appeared to be already.

C. Since so much attention has been devoted to the evil effects wrought in the name of religion, it is only fair—as it is also entirely relevant—to stress the great amount of good which has been done through faith in

<sup>1</sup> Von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, p. 47.

God. Not only does consideration of the great amount of good which has been done through faith in God, provide a negative defence of the contention that men are able to assert at least some valid religious judgments ; it also provides positive verification of the contention.

Thus, to pass over the intellectual enlightenment and graces of character produced by other religions, the intellectual enlightenment and graces of character produced by Christianity are surely most naturally explained as the results of the Christian's genuine apprehension of a goodness existing independently of himself. A calm outlook on this mysterious universe and self-control are not less characteristic of the deluded and hysterical than are purity and self-denial characteristic of those whose conduct is determined mainly by the instinctive impulses of human nature ; yet calmness, self-control, purity, and self-denial are the possessions of many a Christian. How such healthy-mindedness can spring from childish delusions it is extremely difficult to see. No doubt not all Christians are calm, self-controlled, pure, and self-denying ; but they are all at least expected to be such. Wherein some fall short of the Christian ideal, they do so not because of, but in spite of their religion. And whereas there are not a few whose practice is shamefully poor, there have been and are many whose practice justifies the verdict that the world is not worthy of them.<sup>1</sup> To say with Jung that the moral achievements of the latter are the results of dream-thinking, is to say what no one who knows how little dream-thinking contributes to a strenuous endeavour after virtue is likely to accept for a single moment. Even of Scott it was true that " his secret world of day-dreams made him a little insensitive to the anomalies of the real one. It killed in him, except at rare

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 38.

moments, the soul of the reformer. It was a domain where the soul turned in upon itself, and dreams did not result in action." <sup>1</sup>

Again, it is a fact that through faith and prayer many Christians have endured triumphantly the great evils of misunderstanding, persecution, poverty, ill-health, and bereavement. According to Jung, to believe is to cherish an infantile delusion, and to pray is to seek for the satisfaction denied us by an unsatisfying world in happy memories of the past. But are not delusions usually shattered by the hard facts of life, and are not happy memories of the past poor consolation for those in present affliction? If those Christians who, without being fanatics, have endured misunderstanding, persecution, poverty, ill-health, and bereavement triumphantly, have had nothing more to sustain them than delusions and happy memories, then their endurance is very hard to understand. On the other hand, it is easily understood if we admit that, having apprehended the infinite love of God revealed in and through Jesus Christ, they have found in the knowledge of that love and in reliance upon it a sustaining power greater than their adversities.

Most noteworthy of all, it is a fact that Christian faith has changed the current of many men's lives and altered the character of whole civilisations. This is natural, if, as the redeemed themselves say, through faith it is possible to apprehend the Divine Being and receive the aid of His Holy Spirit; but it is extremely unnatural if, as Jung says, the only forces at work in religion are those of wish and fancy. No doubt auto-suggestion and psycho-therapy can alter a man's character in certain respects. It is admitted by psycho-therapists themselves, however, that whereas Christian faith has produced innumerable

<sup>1</sup> Buchan, *Sir Walter Scott*, p. 358.

martyrs and "eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake," and whereas it has enabled not a few representatives of different nations and even of different races to suppress national and racial antagonisms, neither auto-suggestion nor psycho-therapy can produce acts which require the inhibition of the self-preserving, sexual, and racial instincts.<sup>1</sup> Jung urges men and women to give up their infantile religious illusions for that better form of impulse-sublimation which is based on the knowledge that humanity could not exist, if among the herd the one could not sacrifice himself for the other. That is to say, he realises that the mind's suggestions to itself cannot accomplish very much by way of deliverance from evil. But if faith in God has often been the means of redeeming the degraded, and if it has revolutionised the lives of nations, as the history of Christianity proves it to have done, ought not Jung to advance a step further than he does in confessing the weakness of auto-suggestion, and confess also that the faith in God which is incomparably more powerful for good, cannot be faith in a mere projection of human desire, but must be faith in a superhuman life-giving Spirit ?

### (3) *Final Objection to Jung's Theory.*

A final objection to the wish-theory of religious judgments is that it does not give an adequate account of the thinking-process by which those judgments have been and are produced. This is particularly obvious in the case of the religious judgments of the Christian, and once again we may confine ourselves to the latter as we attempt to grasp the point asserted.

According to Jung, the judgments of the Christian are the products of mere dreaming ; but, as a matter of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Balmforth, *Is Christian Experience an Illusion ?* p. 117.

fact, they are at least in part the products of thinking deliberately directed to the historical birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jung, of course, says that of an historical Jesus we know nothing. In saying so, however, he proves only that his opinion on the point is worthless, and inasmuch as his wish-theory of religious judgments fails to allow for their historical subject-matter it must be rejected.

Besides failing to allow for the historical subject-matter of the Christian's religious judgments, Jung's theory does serious injustice to the intellectual structure which Christian thinkers have created on a historical basis. However imperfect that structure may be in parts, on the whole it is a noble piece of work ; it has won and still wins the admiration of good minds ; and how so, if it is the product of mere day-dreaming ? As already observed, Jung makes a startling suggestion concerning the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity. He does not seem to be aware that, whereas he himself employs the vaguest analogies as proofs of his foregone conclusions about religion, the thinkers who believe in God as being triune, do so after scientifically seeking a hypothesis to fit the facts of a threefold religious experience.

The conclusion to which one is forced is that while Jung's distinction between directed-thinking and dream-thinking is valid, he has no right to include all religious thinking in the latter category. No doubt believers in God are subject to manifold errors ; no doubt, however, in manifold ways they also think truly concerning Him. " Just as we simply admit the existence of countless realities, more or less different from, though only lower than or equal to ourselves ; and as we frankly grant the real influence of these realities upon ourselves and our real knowledge of them . . . so also let us simply admit

the existence of a perfect Reality, sufficiently like us to be able to penetrate, and to move us through and through, the which, by so doing, is the original and persistent cause of this our noblest dissatisfaction with anything and all things human. Certainly no other explanation has ever been given which does not sooner or later misstate or explain away the very data, and the immense dynamic force of the data to be explained. But this, the only adequate explanation, moves us on at once, from the quicksands of religion as illusion, to the rock of religion as the witness and vehicle of Reality." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses*, p. 40.



## CHAPTER V

### THE NON-RATIONAL IN RELIGION

OUR discussion of Descartes, Schleiermacher, and Jung has taught us three main things concerning the requirements of a religious epistemology: (i) from the outset we must regard knowledge and reality as being inseparable; (ii) while we must make due allowance for the part played by feeling in the apprehension of God's nature, the feeling-aspect of the religious consciousness must be neither divorced from nor confused with the cognitive aspect; (iii) though longing for God is an integral part of the religious consciousness and is therefore to be reckoned with as determining our search for Him, it does not determine what we actually find.

Bearing these three principles in mind, we have now to try to construct a theory of religious knowledge which, allowing for all three aspects of the religious consciousness, will enable us to account for the judgments in which our knowledge of God is expressed, and also to explain incidentally our religious ignorance and errors. Before attempting this task, however, we shall gain further insight into the nature of our problem by considering a further preliminary: namely, the contention of the late Dr. Rudolf Otto that the Subject of our religious judgments is non-rational.

#### I. GOD CONCEPTUALLY INAPPREHENSIBLE

(I) When Otto says that the Subject of our religious judgments is non-rational, he does not mean—or, at any

rate, he does not profess to mean—that all thinking about God—that is, all “rational” or “conceptual” thinking about Him, is impossible. “We count this the very mark and criterion of a religion’s high rank,” he says,<sup>1</sup> “that it should have no lack of conceptions about God; that it should admit knowledge—the knowledge which comes of faith—of the transcendent in terms of conceptual thought. . . . This must be asserted at the outset and with the most positive emphasis.” On the other hand, the conceptions we have of God “imply a non-rational or supra-rational Subject of which they are the predicates.”<sup>2</sup> This Subject is, indeed, in some way or other within our grasp, otherwise nothing could be asserted of it at all;<sup>2</sup> but the point of importance is that though the Subject of our religious judgments is somehow presented to our minds, it is never so presented that we can apprehend its real nature. When Fichte says that the Absolute is characterised by “energy,” for example, and when Schopenhauer says that it is dæmonic “will,” they speak erroneously; for they speak as if energy and will were real qualifications of the Absolute, whereas, according to Otto, they are only symbolic expressions of feelings felt in the Absolute’s presence, not adequate concepts upon which a scientific structure of knowledge may be based. The Absolute is “properly beyond utterance.”<sup>3</sup> “It is beyond our comprehension and apprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently ‘wholly other,’ whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own.”<sup>4</sup> The most we can do is to indicate it by terms which reflect the feeling-responses to which it gives rise in our consciousness. Thus, it fills us with amaze-

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of the Holy*, ch. i. p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ch. iv. p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ch. i. p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* ch. v. p. 28.

ment, so that we can refer to it as the ineffable "mysterium"; it awes us, so that we can characterise it as being "tremendum"; it attracts us, so that we can also call it "fascinans." And yet in applying these terms to the "numinous" or "wholly other" Reality of which we speak, we must beware of taking them to be real attributes of the Divine, "instead of realising that they can only be admitted as figurative indications of something essentially non-rational by means of symbols drawn from feelings that have analogy to it."<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, "*God transcends all reason in the sense that He is beyond the powers of our conceiving, not merely beyond our powers of comprehension.*"<sup>2</sup>

(2) At this point we naturally ask if Otto does not contradict himself in admitting that we have no lack of conceptions about God, and then urging that God is beyond the powers of our conceiving; but the contradiction is more apparent than real, for by our conceptions of God Otto means only "ideograms"<sup>3</sup> or "schemata" of what he calls our "non-rational intuitions"<sup>4</sup> of the Divine, not concepts in the ordinary sense of the term. An idea  $x$ , he says, may be associated with another idea  $y$  in such a way that there is a lasting connection between the two. Similarly, a religious feeling  $a$  may be associated with another religious feeling  $b$  in such a way that  $b$  is evoked by  $a$ . Such connections, however, are often only chance connections founded on purely external analogies between the given ideas or the given feelings, and so far they have to be distinguished from "necessary connections according to principles of true inward affinity and

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of the Holy*, ch. x. p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ch. xii. p. 98. (The italics are not Otto's.)

<sup>3</sup> He defines an ideogram as "a sort of illustrative substitute for concept." *Vide* ch. iv. p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* ch. xi. p. 89.

cohesion.”<sup>1</sup> Thus they have to be distinguished from the sort of connection which exists between Kant’s *Category of Causality* and its temporal “schema.” In this latter case the analogy between the category and the schema is not chance external resemblance, but essential correspondence, on the basis of which the temporal sequence is said to “schematise” the category.

“Now the relation of the rational to the non-rational element in the idea of the holy or sacred is just such an one of ‘schematisation,’ and the non-rational numinous fact, schematised by such rational concepts as ‘mysteriosum,’ ‘tremendum,’ and ‘fascinans,’ yields us the complex category of the ‘Holy’ itself, richly charged and complete in its fullest meaning.”<sup>2</sup> For example, “the ideas and concepts, which are the parallels or ‘schemata’ on the rational side of the non-rational element of ‘fascination’ are Love, Mercy, Pity, Comfort. These are all ‘natural’ elements of the common psychical life, only they are here thought as absolute and in completeness.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, “the ‘tremendum,’ the daunting and repelling moment of the numinous, is schematised by means of the rational ideas of justice, moral will, and the exclusion of what is opposed to morality; and the moment ‘mysteriosum’ is schematised by the absoluteness of all rational attributes applied to the Deity.”<sup>4</sup>

If we now press Otto to say whether or not the schemata or rational concepts of God to which he refers, give us genuine conceptual knowledge about God, his answer is an emphatic negative. They do give us knowledge about God, he maintains, but only indirectly and on the basis of the non-rational *which is never conceptually apprehended*.<sup>5</sup> Schematisation is always schematisation

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of the Holy*, ch. vii. p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ch. vii. p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ch. vi. p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* ch. xvii. p. 145.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. ch. x. p. 78.

of "unique feeling-responses" <sup>1</sup> to the "wholly other." The schema, "wrath of God," for example, is not a genuine intellectual concept concerning God, but only a "sort of illustrative substitute for a concept," "an 'ideogram' of a unique emotional moment in religious experience, whose singularly daunting and awe-inspiring character is gravely disturbing to those persons who recognise nothing in the Divine nature but goodness, gentleness, love, and a sort of confidential intimacy." <sup>2</sup> What happens is that the numinous is somehow presented to the religious man's mind, arousing various feelings therein, and the feelings are then interpreted as being due to the influence of a Divine Being with such attributes as are capable of arousing them. We must beware, however, of holding those attributes to be "natural attributes, taken absolutely, instead of realising that they can only be admitted as figurative indications of something essentially non-rational—that is, something conceptually inapprehensible—by means of symbols drawn from feelings that have analogy to it." <sup>3</sup> Throughout the process by which the numinous is filled out and charged with rational elements so that it becomes no longer merely "numinous," but the "holy," "all the elements of non-rational 'inconceivability' are retained on the side of the numinous and intensified." <sup>4</sup>

(3) The only other point we need note about Otto's general theory is that the numinous and our ideas concerning the feelings it invokes in us, are apprehended in a purely *a priori* way. "The facts of the numinous

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of the Holy*, ch. iii. p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ch. iii. p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ch. x. p. 79. The parenthesis is not Otto's but is in accordance with his definition of the non-rational. *Vide* ch. i. p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* ch. xvi. p. 139.

consciousness," he says,<sup>1</sup> " point to a hidden substantive source from which the religious ideas and feelings are formed, which lies in the mind independently of sense-experience—' a pure reason ' in the profoundest sense, which, because of the surpassingness of its content, must be distinguished from the pure theoretical and the pure practical reason of Kant as something yet higher or deeper than they." Further, " the same *a priori* character belongs to the *connection* of the rational and the non-rational elements in religion, their inward and necessary union. The histories of religion recount indeed, as though it were something axiomatic, the gradual interpretation of the two, the process by which ' the Divine ' is charged and filled out with ethical meaning. And this process is, in fact, *felt* as something whose inner necessity we feel to be self-evident. But, then, this inward self-evidence is a problem in itself. We are forced to assume an obscure *a priori* knowledge of the necessity of this synthesis, combining rational and non-rational; for it is not by any means a logical necessity." <sup>2</sup>

## 2. CRITICISM

A. Otto's doctrine contains a valuable element of truth. Since man is a finite being and God is infinite, man can never comprehend God; his knowledge of God is of necessity extremely fragmentary. Not only so. The terms in which he thinks and speaks of God are at best, as Aquinas has shown, only analogical descriptions of God's nature; they can never be predicated of God *simpliciter* or in the same sense as that in which they may be predicated of us. Thus, when we say that God is good, we must remember the infinite difference between His goodness and our goodness. No doubt His goodness is not

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Idea of the Holy*, ch. xiv. p. 118.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ch. xvii. p. 140.

only infinitely greater than ours, but also in some degree similar to ours. But since it is infinitely greater, we can never think of it in such a way that we are aware of its full nature as it is in itself. Our affirmations of God's goodness are only approximations to the ultimate truth concerning it, so that "the true meaning of the statement that God is good is this, that whatever good we predicate of His creatures pre-exists in God in some higher mode."<sup>1</sup> In general, as Otto puts it, God is non-rational or supra-rational; His kind and character are incommensurable with our own; He is not merely beyond the powers of our comprehension, but also—in the sense explained—beyond the powers of our conceiving.

B. So far as Otto asserts the "inconceivability" of God in the sense explained, we must bear his doctrine in mind and, as we proceed, strive to allow for its essential truth. That is to say, our theory of religious knowledge must be such as to account for the inescapable inadequacy and analogical nature of our very noblest conceptions of the Divine Being. But, whether he intends to do so or not, Otto does not stop short at asserting the inconceivability of God in the sense explained; he says that God is not only beyond our comprehension and beyond our adequate conceiving, but altogether inapprehensible.<sup>2</sup> He is beyond our apprehension "not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in the Absolute we come upon something 'wholly other,'"

<sup>1</sup> R. L. Patterson's *Conception of God in the Philosophy of Aquinas*, p. 110. This volume contains a fine discussion of Aquinas' views on the Via Remotionis and the Method of Analogy. See pp. 110-111 and pp. 227-57.

<sup>2</sup> Contrast the view of Aquinas, who, while he insists on God's transcendence, holds nevertheless that there is a relation of *similarity* between God and His creatures, so that it is possible for us to argue from the created to the Creator and to ascribe predicates to the Deity which have real meaning. Cf. *op. cit.* pp. 235-36.

something to which we can refer only in terms which reflect the feeling-responses to which It gives rise in our consciousness. And when we discover that, as already pointed out, the terms which reflect the feeling-responses to which the Absolute gives rise in our consciousness, though Otto calls them concepts, are not concepts in the ordinary sense, but only "schemata" or symbols of the Absolute corresponding to the various feelings with which It inspires us, are we not bound to conclude that Otto's doctrine is tantamount to a denial that we have any real knowledge of God at all? Though he censures Schleiermacher for holding that we come upon God only by reasoning to a Cause beyond ourselves giving rise to our feelings of absolute dependence, does he not virtually repeat Schleiermacher's error? It is true that he admits that to some extent the non-rational Subject of our religious judgments is somehow "within our grasp," and that otherwise nothing could be asserted of It at all. But though he admits that the Subject of our religious judgments is somehow presented to our minds, he insists that It is never so presented that we can even in the least degree apprehend Its real nature. All we have initially is certain "unique feeling-responses" to What is presented. And to this assertion it must be replied that God inspires us with such feelings as those of creaturely amazement, awe, and delight through being first apprehended as "mysteriosum," "tremendum," and "fascinans"; He does not first present Himself to us as a non-rational Being about Whom we can say absolutely nothing, and then, after inspiring us with feelings which from our point of view have no conceivable cause, appear indirectly as the rationally-conceived Cause of those same feelings.

C. With regard to Otto's contention that we appre-



hend God *a priori*, if he means thereby that we cannot apprehend God at all unless we are endowed with the capacity to apprehend Him, there is nothing to be said except that we need not possess any unique faculty of the mind in virtue of which God is apprehended; for the uniqueness of religious knowledge has to do with the uniqueness not of the knowing mind, but of its Divine Object. On the other hand, if Otto means that in apprehending God we apply to His nature—so far as It is presented to us—categories of our own understandings, he is saying once again that we do not and cannot in any measure apprehend God as He really is, but only as He appears to us to be. In other words, he is giving up as insoluble the given problem of the religious epistemologist. The fact to be explained is the believer's basic conviction that in some measure he genuinely *knows* Whom he believes, and we must beware of losing sight of this as much as we must beware of forgetting God's transcendence. Humbly to acknowledge that we know Him only in part, is not to deny the wonder of His self-revelation to us by saying with Otto that we do not really know Him at all. In constructing a theory of religious knowledge it is part of our task to show that while our concepts of God are never adequate to describe the ultimate truth concerning Him, they may nevertheless express some truth.

## PART II

### CHAPTER VI

#### KNOWLEDGE OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD

IT has been stated above that the special character of religious knowledge is to be explained not by reference to any special faculty of the believing mind, but by reference to the special nature of the believing mind's Object. If this statement is to be justified, religious knowledge must be shown to be a particular form of knowledge in general. Hence two questions arise: (1) On what conditions is knowledge in general possible? (2) Within the sphere of our general knowledge how do we come to be aware in particular of the being, nature, and will of God?

In the present chapter we are concerned only with the first of these questions, and we cannot do better than allow ourselves to be guided throughout by the line of argument advanced by Professor G. F. Stout in his great work, *Mind and Matter*.<sup>1</sup>

#### I. IMMEDIATE EXPERIENCE. HUME

Beginning with our common sense and scientific knowledge of material existence, we may agree with those empirical philosophers who say that such knowledge is founded on what we immediately experience, as we experience pain or pleasure while feeling it, or a sensum

<sup>1</sup> Of Dr. Stout's work the Dean of St. Paul's says, "I venture to predict that it will be recognised as one of the most important philosophical achievements of our time." See *The Purpose of God*, p. 106.

while sensating it. The knowledge founded on the contents of immediate experience, however, may be conceived in either of two ways. It may be conceived as being knowledge initially confined to the contents of immediate experience, or it may be conceived as being so founded on them that from the outset it transcends them.

A. The first alternative is adopted in a special form by Hume, who holds that the data from which we start are bare *sensa* or "impressions" and their faint reproductions or copies called "ideas." Even desires and volitions and pleasant and painful feelings are included under the term "impressions"; and according to Hume these impressions, together with their faint reproductions or copies, are self-complete entities. They are "loose and separate," inasmuch as the only relations which exist between them are those of co-existence and sequence. Thus, though *a* and *b* be found to be regularly associated with each other in consciousness, there is never any justification for asserting that when *a* occurs, *b* will certainly or probably follow. Such justification would exist if we could discover a tie connecting *a* and *b* as a string connects two parcels; but even our experience in willing an event and having our volition fulfilled does not give us the insight we require. "Why has the will an influence over the tongue and fingers, not over the heart and liver? This question would never embarrass us were we conscious of a power in the former case, not in the latter."<sup>1</sup> But, as a matter of fact, we have no apprehension of necessary connection in our voluntary command over either the organs of the body or the faculties of the soul. The appearance of necessary connection—for example, between the clenching of the hand and the will to clench it—arises only through the fact that constant

<sup>1</sup> Hume's *Enquiry*, edited by Selby-Bigge, p. 65.

repetition of the two events generates an expectation that when the one occurs, the other will occur together with it.

B. The value of Hume's theory is that, as he himself confesses with his charming candour, its logical outcome is utter absurdity. If we admit his premises, we must accept his conclusion that there is no such thing as valid inference from the existence of one matter of fact to the existence of another. We may and do believe that if a man thrusts his hand into a fire, his hand will be scorched ; but no matter how firmly this belief is held, it has no reasonable foundation. Hence, having failed to explain our knowledge of the external world as reasonably grounded, Hume is confronted with the necessity of explaining it away as an illusion.

C. In facing this problem, Hume says that the man who has had his hand scorched once or twice by thrusting it into a fire, expects through the association of ideas generated by custom that if he repeats the experiment, it will have the same result ; and that he mistakenly confuses this expectation with what he calls knowledge of cause and effect. But is this account of the matter, from Hume's own point of view, a possible explanation of the facts ?

Hume's attempt to explain away our knowledge of cause and effect as mere expectation founded on past experience possesses what plausibility it does, because it is based on what—from Hume's own point of view—is an illegitimate assumption. Thus, in saying that the man who has had his hand scorched through thrusting it into a fire expects that if he repeats the experiment in the future, it will have the same result, Hume takes it for granted that the man can in the immediate present think both of the past and the future. But this assumption is utterly inconsistent with Hume's original contention that

all we are capable of knowing is the immediate content of experience. Clearly, if we are wholly confined to the experience of the moment, we cannot remember or have the thought of what we have experienced in the past, nor can we expect the future to be like it. It follows, therefore, that both as an attempt to explain our knowledge of the external world and as an attempt to explain it away, Hume's theory breaks down. And this indicates that his initial view of what is given in and through immediate experience, is false.

## 2. SENSE AND THOUGHT. KANT

Since Hume's initial assumption does not enable us either to explain or to explain away our knowledge of the external world, we turn to the alternative view suggested by Kant: namely, that our knowledge of the external world involves both sense and thought in inseparable unity, and that through sense-experience we immediately know a reality beyond it.

This view may be accepted at once in so far as it stresses the point that we can in no way know the material world as it exists, persists, and changes independently of us, unless we have some clue or clues to its nature immediately given us in sense-experience. On the other hand, we must ask if and how we can indeed, as Kant maintains, immediately know what is not confined to the contents of immediate experience, but transcends it.

"Setting aside physical existence and adopting provisionally the subjective standpoint, we can produce at least one clear example of immediate knowledge of existence which is not actually experienced at the time or in the process of knowing it. I refer to memory-knowledge of what we have actually experienced in the past in contrast with the present. A man is thirsty and desires to

appease his thirst by drinking. In this state of desire the man does not actually or immediately experience the quenching of his thirst. For the desire and its satisfaction are incompatible ; they cannot be actually experienced at the same time. Let us now suppose that the thirsty man has quenched his thirst. What he is then immediately cognisant of is the bygone actual experience of being thirsty, not any present simulacrum or image of it with the sting extracted. The object, or part of the object, of his thought and attention in remembering is the actual occurrence of the felt thirst as he lived through it in the past, distinguished from and contrasted with his present situation. He is not living through it while he is remembering it as past. Thirst satisfied and thirst unsatisfied are so far incompatible that they cannot both be actually experienced together.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, of course, as in the case just quoted, though what we immediately know by memory-knowledge is not immediately experienced at the time or in the process of knowing it, it has been immediately experienced in the past. So far, there is an important distinction between memory-knowledge and immediate knowledge of physical existence, which if there be such knowledge at all, transcends immediate experience altogether. But is the distinction such that it destroys any relevant analogy justifying us in holding that if the one is possible, the other is possible also ?

In spite of the fact that there is a distinction between memory-knowledge of the past and immediate knowledge of physical existence, there is no distinction in principle. Our past has a distinct existence of its own which is independent of our knowledge of it ; so far, it is on exactly the same footing from our point of view as the

<sup>1</sup> Stout, *Mind and Matter*, p. 215.

material world which exists, persists, and changes independently of us. If, therefore, our past may be known immediately though not immediately experienced, the material world may be known immediately though immediate knowledge of the material world altogether transcends the content of immediate experience.

Granting, then, that there *may* be immediate knowledge of physical existence transcending the immediate experience of the individual, we have now to ask whether or not this possibility is realised *in fact*.

In facing this question it is necessary to recall that what we are seeking to account for is our knowledge of the world as a world of things existing independently of individual experience, locally separate from each other, inter-acting with each other, and possessing the various qualities of matter. As already maintained in dealing with the theory of Hume this world cannot be known as it actually is known, if we are initially confined to the bare contents of our immediate experience. But if our knowledge *must* transcend the contents of immediate experience, and if, as we have just seen, it *may* do so, we are bound to conclude that as a matter of fact it *does* do so. The only difficulty which remains is that of explaining how.

### 3. THE WORLD IN ITS MATERIAL ASPECT

Confining ourselves for the moment to the material aspect of the world we know, and reaffirming the view that our only clue to the existence and nature of physical objects lies in immediate sense-experience, we can account for our knowledge of the world as sensibly qualified if we say that we initially apprehend our sense-data as continued into an existence beyond them and fundamentally akin in nature to them. What explains the fact that

physical phenomena are known as being more than mere *sensa*, is the fact that though we immediately *know* them through immediate experience, we never immediately *experience* them. "Their full nature as they are in themselves necessarily escapes us, just because we are not in the strict sense acquainted with them, as we are acquainted with the content of our own sense-experience."<sup>1</sup> Our own sense-experience is that minute part of the physical world which is immediately given us.

#### 4. THE WORLD IN ITS DYNAMIC ASPECT

If, now, we turn from the material to the dynamic aspect of the known world, we are confronted with the necessity of explaining the fact that the world is known not as a mere sensational flux, but as an ordered system of things and processes such that it is possible to infer the being and nature of one event from another.

As against Hume, we may maintain that our sense-data are not "loose and separate" in his sense of these words. On the contrary, the sense-data of each experient are always included in the unity of a single sensory-continuum as its partial phases. And yet, if we confine our attention to our bare *sensa*, we must acknowledge with Berkeley that they are "visibly inactive," having "nothing of power or agency included in them,"<sup>2</sup> so that there is nothing in the nature of one particular change *a* in a sensory-continuum which determines it to be followed either certainly or probably by another particular change *b*. How, then, do we gain our knowledge of the world as a whole within which events are interconnected according to the principle of causality?

In immediate experience we are aware of ourselves as

<sup>1</sup> Stout, *Mind and Matter*, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> A. C. Fraser's *Selections from Berkeley*, para. 25, p. 50.



being active and passive in relation to a world of which we are parts. This does not mean, indeed, that we are initially aware of ourselves as agents and patients apart from having knowledge of existence beyond ourselves. But, in being aware of ourselves as active and passive, we are initially aware of a world transcending the contents of immediate experience within which we play our distinctive parts as living beings. We will certain ends, and we achieve them or fail to achieve them according as the sum-total of relevant factors, including our volitions, makes achievement possible or impossible. Whether we succeed or fail, we immediately experience our own interests, strivings, or tendencies, and it is from these that we get a clue to the meaning of activity, energy, or force in the world in general; for just as our sense-data are apprehended as being continued into an existence beyond them and akin in nature to them, so our felt tendencies are apprehended as partial aspects of a world-continuum, which, in addition to being sensory or material in its fundamental constitution, is also dynamic or mental.

## 5. CONCLUSION

It remains to gather together the threads of the foregoing argument, and then to state the general theory which it suggests.

From the outset the knowledge of the individual is a partial apprehension of the whole of reality, this reality being known in its multiplicity and unity as fundamentally akin in nature to the individual himself both in the subjective and in the objective aspects of his immediate experience. No doubt this view so stresses the possibility of a vast range of knowledge that at first sight it may seem to err by not leaving room for ignorance. But, if it be asked why, if the individual possesses a partial

apprehension of the whole of reality, he is nevertheless immensely ignorant and prone to error, the answer is that though he is not limited *to* the contents of his immediate experience, he is limited *by* them. Only as experience advances, can he advance in knowledge, and mistakes are inevitable in the process inasmuch as the possible solutions to most of his questions are innumerable from his limited point of view. Trial, success, and failure mark him from the beginning to the end of his existence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This chapter professes to be no more than a brief and very inadequate summary of what the writer takes to be the main theses of the theory of knowledge expounded and defended with consummate power by Dr. Stout in his volume of Gifford Lectures entitled *Mind and Matter*. In what follows, an attempt will be made to show that Dr. Stout's theory provides the theologian with the very epistemology which he needs in order to fulfil his special task of accounting for the believer's knowledge of God.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PERCEPTION OF OTHER SELVES : TRANSITION TO AWARENESS OF GOD

THE next problem to be faced is the problem of accounting for the way in which the individual comes to be aware of the existence of other persons as special parts of the world existing, persisting, and changing independently of his perception of it. The solipsist, it is true, denies that he has any knowledge at all of other persons. But we may pass over the view of the solipsist without discussion ; for most philosophers and all ordinary folk are agreed that among the things which the individual perceives, are other individuals having thoughts, feelings, and desires similar to his own. This is the fact to be accounted for, and if we succeed in accounting for it, we shall have advanced a step towards explaining further how the individual comes to be aware of the existence and nature not only of other living beings like himself, but also of the one, true, and living God.

#### I. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION

A. Our starting-point for the explanation of our perception of other selves is the same as our starting-point for the explanation of our knowledge of the world in general. That is to say, our perception of other selves is founded on what we immediately experience.

Now, as we have seen, we cannot explain the individual's perception even of physical objects unless we make a two-fold assumption as to the way in which from the outset his knowledge, though founded on what he

immediately experiences, immeasurably transcends it. First, we must assume that he initially apprehends his sense-data as continued into an existence beyond them and including them as its partial phases. But while this assumption is necessary for the explanation of the individual's perception of physical objects, it is not of itself sufficient for such an explanation; because, though it enables us to account for the fact that we think of observed objects as having certain sensible qualities, it does not enable us to account for our knowledge of their independent reality and causal inter-connections. In order to account for our knowledge of their independent reality and causal inter-connections, we must also assume that from the outset the individual is aware of his immediately-experienced interests, strivings, or tendencies as being continued like his sense-data into an existence beyond and akin in nature to them too. He has no other clue to the existence of causation in the external world, and therefore no other clue to the existence of physical objects as independent factors in world-process.<sup>1</sup>

If this twofold assumption is granted, it follows that from the outset the individual is prepared to find in the external world mind and matter inseparably united in the manner in which he immediately experiences them as inseparably united in his own being. More specifically, he is prepared to find that any particular object which he observes in the external world is an embodied mind like himself. Our problem, therefore, is to show how in certain instances as distinguished from others this general expectation is so fulfilled as to yield the individual indubitable knowledge of other selves.

<sup>1</sup> See the section on the activity factor involved in perception, *Mind and Matter*, pp. 281-303. Cf. Stout's *Groundwork of Psychology*, pp. 90-100.

B. "The development of knowledge through experience," says Dr. Stout, "consists in the more or less successful endeavour to correlate perceptual data with each other in the pursuit of practical and theoretical ends. It is in this process, which is essentially one of inference, that the distinction arises between external bodies which do and which do not belong to embodied selves."<sup>1</sup> For when the individual observes in the external world certain objects which, as distinguished from others, not merely resemble him in appearance, but act with such spontaneity and purposiveness as he finds in himself, and above all help to supply his subjective needs or thwart his wishes, he naturally and inevitably interprets their behaviour as the outward manifestation of such an inner life as he himself possesses. And since this interpretation of their behaviour enables him to adapt himself successfully to his environment, and is thus constantly and closely confirmed by his practical experience, its validity is never seriously doubted by him. Except by a comparatively rare effort of reflective analysis, he is not even aware that there has been any element of "interpretation" in his knowledge of other selves at all.

## 2. FURTHER EXPOSITION

The foregoing theory of the preception of other selves, thus briefly stated, may be further elucidated by describing some of the main factors which prompt the individual implicitly to infer from the observed behaviour of certain objects in the external world that they are embodied minds. These factors are movements in general, and, in particular, purposive action and responsible behaviour.

(A) The individual is immediately aware of an activity in himself in virtue of which he can initiate and control

<sup>1</sup> *Mind and Matter*, p. 303.

certain sensible changes in the external world. At the same time he is immediately aware that these sensible changes resemble and are continuously connected with other sensible changes which occur independently of him. He tends, therefore, to regard the sensible changes in the external world occurring independently of him as being initiated and controlled by a spontaneity analogous to that with which he is immediately acquainted in himself. Thus the savage treats the movements not only of living creatures, but also of such inanimate objects as plants, trees, rocks, and rivers as being due to the agency of spirits which think, feel, and will more or less as he himself does. Indeed, apart from certain limiting conditions which we shall discuss presently, the tendency to interpret the behaviour of objects in the external world anthropomorphically is so strong that it is applied quite indiscriminately.

(B) If movements in general tend to be interpreted as being due to quasi-human mental agency, how does the modern man come to distinguish among movements in general between those which do and those which do not owe their origin and continuation to living creatures as contrasted with what he calls inanimate objects?

The distinction arises from the modern man's superior knowledge of the nature of the material world. This does nothing to *verify* the savage's belief that plants, trees, rocks, and rivers have a mental life closely corresponding to that of human beings and capable of being influenced in similar ways. On the contrary, to treat them as if they had a quasi-human mental life is misleading and practically useless. For success in practical undertakings everything depends on discovering certain rules or laws of interaction between material objects which contain no reference at all to their possessing an inner consciousness.

Thus the crude anthropomorphism of the savage is gradually discarded with man's gradually increasing knowledge of and control over his material environment. Nevertheless, there remains a whole class of movements which irresistibly suggest to the observer that they are originated and continued by living creatures possessing an inner consciousness more or less like his own.

For example, consider the case of a cat stalking a mouse, or the case of a rabbit being pursued by a dog.

The cat approaches the mouse stealthily, its eyes rivetted on its prey. When the mouse moves so that the cat might come within its range of vision, the cat at once crouches down. The mouse returning to its original position, the cat resumes its stealthy approach. Then, having approached near enough unobserved, it pounces on the mouse and secures it in its claws. The rabbit, seeing the dog, at once scampers for shelter. Just as the dog is about to overtake it, it suddenly turns, and makes off in another direction. The dog pulls himself up in his headlong advance, turns too, and resumes his pursuit. But when once again he is about to overtake the rabbit, the rabbit disappears into a convenient hole in the ground.

Now, in watching the cat and the mouse or the rabbit and the dog, the observer sees on the part of the cat or the rabbit a whole series of actions systematically co-ordinated so as to bring about a certain result, the capture of the mouse in the one case and escape from the dog in the other. But he himself has already passed through experiences in which he has systematically co-ordinated whole series of actions as means serving to bring about results which are ends of his own desiring, and, being ready to find evidence of the presence of mind in the external world, when he sees the corresponding behaviour of the cat or the rabbit he interprets it as being due to a

purposiveness corresponding to his own. Thus, while he is still quite young, the child, having learned to get what he wants by co-ordinating various series of actions as means serving to bring about desired ends, has the experience which enables him to distinguish between living creatures and inanimate objects as those which do and those which do not show signs of acting on purpose. At the age of three or four he may still show evidence of the strong tendency towards crude anthromorphism which we have noted in the savage—for example, by crying over a broken toy because he thinks of his toy as feeling pain on account of its being broken. But partly because he hears older people speaking as if inanimate objects do not feel what happens to them, and partly because he himself sees in them no signs of purposiveness, he rapidly learns to distinguish quite clearly between them and living creatures.<sup>1</sup>

(C) So far we have discussed the observed movements which, being interpreted as due to mental activity more or less similar to that of the observer himself, enable him to distinguish between living creatures and inanimate objects. The question remains as to what enables him to single out certain living creatures as distinctively human beings.

Here the vital factor is what Dr. Stout has called "responsive behaviour," behaviour being responsive "when it is in a distinctive and spontaneous way relevant to the individual's own interests, his emotions and practical needs."<sup>2</sup>

For example, consider the relations of a baby to his

<sup>1</sup> There is an adaptation of means to ends in the material world which can be conceived, later on, as part of a general teleological order. But of course such a conception is quite beyond the mental grasp of a child.

<sup>2</sup> *Mind and Matter*, p. 303.



mother. He cries because he feels hungry, and she approaches him and gives him food. Again he cries because he is now feeling uncomfortable in tight or damp clothes, and again his mother approaches him and attends to his needs. Besides, she is constantly doing things to amuse or console him, singing to him, fondling him, directing his attention to pleasing objects, and so on. Now in these respects the behaviour of the baby's mother is very different from the behaviour of the inanimate objects which he observes around him. Whereas his mother spontaneously acts so as to satisfy his various wants, these inanimate objects do not. He may stretch out his hand to and cry for his rattle ; but, if the rattle is not within his reach, it does not move towards him and place itself in his hand. It is only if and when his mother or some other person comes to his assistance, that his desire for his rattle is fulfilled. In the circumstances, therefore, the baby, who, as already argued, begins with a vague awareness of the presence of mind in the external world, interprets the behaviour of his mother—or of any other person who acts towards him as she does—as expressive of a subjective experience corresponding to his own. Not, of course, that at this stage of his development there is any explicit reference by him on his subjective experience or any explicit process of inference such as, “ I find in my mother's behaviour responses to my needs which I do not find in the behaviour of certain other objects which I observe ; hence her behaviour, as distinct from theirs, must be due to the presence in her of a mind corresponding to my own in such fashion that she is aware of my needs and willing to satisfy them.” Nevertheless, the child is to some extent cognisant of a difference between his mother as a living being like himself and inanimate objects ; and what we maintain is that since

he has no immediate experience of or no direct acquaintance with his mother's mental processes, such knowledge of them as he possesses must be obtained through a process which is inferential in principle, the inference being based on his initial tendency to look for evidence of the presence of mind in the world together with such evidence of mind in individual form as he finds in his mother's responsive behaviour.

So far as the child's knowledge of his mother—and of any other individuals who respond to his needs as she does—is inferential, it is also, to begin with, merely tentative. How does it attain to ever-increasing certainty?

As the child grows older, he begins to notice resemblances between his own body and bodily movements and the bodies and bodily movements of other persons. Their movements, therefore, are thought of as having such subjective initiation as that with which he is immediately acquainted in his own consciousness, and so far the child's knowledge of other selves tends to become more clear and definite. But if the recognition of resemblances between his own body and the bodies of other persons thus plays some part in making the child's knowledge of others more clear and definite, the part played by such recognition is relatively unimportant.<sup>1</sup> What is of fundamental importance is the constant verification of the child's first tentative knowledge of others which is supplied by their continued co-operation with him in the furtherance of his practical interests.

<sup>1</sup> It is not even essential to his awareness of the existence of other selves. "If, when the baby was hungry, his bottle spontaneously approached his lips in the right position, and spontaneously went away again when his hunger was appeased, the bottle would be for him an embodied self, in spite of want of resemblance between him and it." See *Mind and Matter*, p. 304.

He learns to count on this co-operation as something which is spontaneously given him by other persons, but which is not thus given him by inanimate objects ; and since acting on this expectation brings him ever-increasing success in adapting himself to his environment, the interpretation which he thus puts on others' behaviour is so increasingly confirmed as to become for him indubitable. He becomes more and more aware of others as having perceptions, ideas, and interests like his own ; as perceiving, thinking about, and being interested in the things which he perceives, thinks about, and is interested in ; and as perceiving, thinking about, and being interested in him himself as one among other members of human society.

Now the child's interest in the interest which others take in him—his desire for their approval and help, and his fears of their disapproval and opposition—prompts him to pay greater and greater attention to their bodily behaviour as indicative of their attitude to him. In spite of this, in many instances he cannot interpret their actions correctly because he has no experience of having performed more or less similar actions himself. But this deficiency is more and more supplied by his progressive imitation of the actions which he sees others perform. His imitation of their actions gives him, indeed, relatively vivid insight into what they are thinking, feeling, and willing. And side by side with this insight goes the still more important insight derived from the acquisition of language. Gradually he finds that he can complete his own trains of ideas only by the help of ideas suggested to him through the words spoken to him by others, and that only by expressing his own thoughts in words can he elicit from them the required expression of theirs. When he asks a question and receives an answer, the answer, it

is true, is not of his own making ; yet it is in a distinctive and spontaneous way relevant to the need expressed in his question, and it is therefore regarded by him as coming from another mind which is not only thinking of the same things as he himself is thinking of, but is also thinking of his thoughts concerning these things. Similarly, when he gives answers to the questions of others, he becomes aware of others as being dependent on him for the satisfaction of their needs just as he is dependent on them for the satisfaction of his. In short, what from a logical point of view is his initially tentative assumption of the existence of others like himself is so constantly and so thoroughly verified through ordinary intersubjective intercourse that it becomes clear, definite, and certain knowledge.

### 3. DEFENCE OF THEORY

It may be objected to the account which we have just given of the perception of other selves that it founds such perception on an inference by mere analogy, and that this is unsatisfactory for two reasons: (i) it is unsound psychologically. When a child sees a man clenching his fist and stamping on the ground with his foot, for example, he does not say to himself, "If I were clenching my fist and stamping my foot on the ground, I should be feeling angry. Now the man whom I observe is clenching his fist and stamping his foot on the ground. I infer, therefore, that he is a person like myself who happens to be feeling angry." On the contrary, such a process of reasoning is so complicated as to be for the child altogether impossible. (ii) Logically, the alleged inference by analogy is so weak that it fails to account for the certainty of our knowledge of other selves. The individual may reach a position, it is true, in which he can say that if this, that, or the other

external body were his own, its behaviour would express such mental life as he himself immediately experiences. But we must remember that this, that, or the other external body is *not* his own. Hence, if he infers that since its behaviour would imply the presence of a mind like his if it were his own, he is neglecting the possibility that it is a purely material object, and that its behaviour is determined by purely material conditions. He is illegitimately generalising from the single instance in which a body is initially known to be connected with a mind, to an indefinite number of other cases in which this is not initially known.

These objections are admittedly plausible. They derive their plausibility, however, only from the fact that they are based on a failure to grasp a cardinal point in our theory: namely, that from the outset the individual apprehends both his *sensa* and his subjective experiences as continued into an existence beyond them and akin in nature to them, so that from the outset he is prepared to find in the external world objects which have both the bodily and the mental aspects with which he is immediately acquainted in himself as being inseparably united.

Bearing this cardinal point in mind, let us see whether or not the objections are sound.

(i) It is true that when a child sees a man clenching his fist and stamping his foot on the ground, he is aware of the man as an angry man without going through any form of argument about him. But by the time that the child is able to recognise an angry man as such when he sees one, he has already instinctively clenched his own fist and stamped his own foot on the ground in anger. Hence, when he observes another do the same sort of thing, the other's behaviour at once has meaning for him. It means for him the behaviour of another person like

himself who is feeling angry ; for from the outset he is prepared to find in the external world states of feeling and modes of bodily action inseparably united in the manner in which he has found them to be inseparably united in his own being. And though he does not—and, indeed, cannot—explicitly formulate any argument in support of his conclusion, this does not alter the fact that, from the point of view of reflective analysis, his knowledge of the man who clenches his fist and stamps his foot on the ground is not immediate, but is in principle inferential.

(ii) The logical objection to our theory would be quite incontrovertible, if, as it assumes, the individual began with no knowledge of mind in the world other than his own, so that his mind was for him an isolated mental phenomenon in a world otherwise known to be purely material. Given such conditions, it is possible that the individual could have no thought of other minds at all. If he could, the thought would arise only through an inference by mere analogy which, in the given conditions, would be extremely precarious. Even if it enabled him to forecast accurately the behaviour of certain objects in the external world, this would still leave open the possibility that some alternative explanation of their behaviour was the right one. But the supposed conditions, we have shown, are not the actual conditions. The actual conditions are that the individual initially knows his own being as continued into an existence beyond it and akin in nature to it both in its bodily and in its mental aspects. Hence, with regard to any body in the external world, the question inevitably arises for him whether or not it is an embodied mind like himself ; and whether it is or not—and, of course, it need not be—is decided definitely and certainly by appropriate evidence of the kind which we have already described. Responsive

behaviour and the intersubjective intercourse to which it leads, leave the individual without a shadow of doubt that he lives in a world containing other individuals of like passions with himself.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. TRANSITION TO AWARENESS OF GOD

Having accounted for our perception of other selves, we may now proceed to make a preliminary statement concerning the nature of our awareness of God as the Supreme Self.

It is by a process similar to, though very much more complicated than the process by which we become aware of the existence of one another, that the believer gradually attains his knowledge of God. Beginning as he does with a tendency to look for evidence of the presence of mind everywhere, he is prompted—by a multitude of facts and events which he observes in the material world, by what he knows of history, by his own immediately-given spiritual experiences, and by what he learns from the lives and through the mental co-operation of others—explicitly or implicitly to infer that over all there is a Supreme Mind akin in nature to and also far transcending his own. The awareness of the existence and nature of God so gained is at first tentative and insecure. But through the verifications of his initial inference which are supplied by the subsequent course of experience, including all that the individual is able to share of the experience of others like himself, the inference becomes for him much more than a mere working hypothesis. Truly, since God is infinite and since the observed facts on the basis of which He is held

<sup>1</sup> The above account of the perception of other selves is adopted from the writings of Dr. Stout. It will be found worked out with all his fulness and force of argument in the relevant sections of his *Manual of Psychology*, his *Groundwork of Psychology*, and his *Mind and Matter*.

to exist are—in spite of their inexpressible multiplicity—relatively few and capable of a great variety of different interpretations from the individual's limited point of view, there is ample room for error in conceiving God's nature and will. Further, for the same reasons there is always room for faith in so far as faith is trust in—not knowledge of—a Reality which never is, and never can be completely understood. Nevertheless, the believer who begins by inferring the existence of God in hesitating fashion, has the validity of the inference so confirmed according as he acts on it, that finally he is able to say that at least in some measure he *knows* Whom he believes. Indeed, he may know God's justice and mercy with the same certainty as that with which he knows both the virtue and the kindness of his fellow-men.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BEGINNINGS OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

THE general statements made at the end of the preceding chapter amount to the suggestion that we may best explain our knowledge of God as the Supreme Self along the lines on which we have been able to account for our knowledge of one another. Acting on this suggestion, we proceed to examine the general trend of the growth of religious knowledge from its crude beginnings among primitive men to its crown among those who know God as the Father of Jesus Christ. If we can account for this growth in the way suggested, we shall thereby establish our suggestion as one which provides a satisfactory theory of the nature of religious knowledge.

#### I. THE RELIGION OF THE SAVAGE

The simplest form of religion open to present-day investigation is the religion of the savage, and we may begin with the savage's well-attested belief in the existence of *mana*.

According to the anthropologists, the savage conceives *mana* as the supernatural power whose aid may be secured for dealing with the incalculable element in life. As for the calculable element, the uniform portion of the course of events, it is known to, and successfully dealt with, or allowed for, by the savage by his own efforts or by his own forethought ; for the savage—witness his skill in tracking and sketching wild animals—is a close observer of natural processes. But it is only to a certain degree

that the future repeats the past ; hence, as the savage looks ahead with regard to the provision of his daily food, let us say, or the maintenance of his clan in sufficient numbers, he is constantly faced with an unknown factor which cannot be dealt with according to fixed rules.

Now, the savage finds in himself a certain spontaneity in virtue of which he does not act like a mere automaton, but can produce within his given circumstances results which, but for his spontaneous efforts, would not be produced at all. In the world beyond him, therefore, he infers that there must be a spontaneity similar to his own which is responsible for these incalculable variations in the ordinary course of nature which alternately evoke his hopes and his fears. Inasmuch as this spontaneity is conceived as being able to do wonders, it inspires the savage with feelings of awe. Awe is also inspired in him by the fact that the supernatural power which makes things behave uncommonly, sometimes makes them behave so to the savage's serious detriment. But since *mana* works not only in a detrimental, but also—and indeed often—in a beneficial way, the savage *trusts* *mana* as well as *fears* it, and by various means makes it his business to get into touch with it in such a way that he may count on its aid in dealing with what would otherwise be a source of paralysing mystery.

For example, in his quest for food the savage discovers that unless the external world responds—or is made to respond—to his needs, he cannot deal successfully with a situation which constantly enforces on his mind his dependence on a power or powers other than himself. He cannot eat merely by wishing to do so. Even when he is not hunting wild animals—a precarious business whose results are never certain—but only gathering the products of plants and trees, he has to exert himself so as to over-

come an apparent indifference on the part of nature to his being supplied with what he needs ; and no matter how carefully he tries to distinguish between what is good for eating and what is not, mistakes are inevitable as often as nature is not kind to him. In particular, he must face the possibility that his necessary food may be denied to him altogether through the coming of a long period of drought over which no amount of self-exertion is able to work any beneficial effect at all.

In the circumstances, the savage has recourse to a sacred rite which we may call his " food-dance," whereby he acknowledges his dependence on the supernatural power by whose friendliness alone the indifference of nature to his needs may be overcome and he himself made successful in his quest for daily nourishment. Thus in crying " Fruit ! Fruit ! Fruit !" at the end of their " food-dance," the Malays frankly express their dependence on the mercy of the Unseen, and, at the same time, pray for the Unseen's miraculous intervention in their favour.<sup>1</sup> No doubt the prayer is primarily a request for a purely material blessing ; yet the request carries with it a recognition of certain spiritual implications, and this has the good effect of inducing the Malays—who, with the innate optimism of humanity, believe that in response to their prayer there is now friendly mana on their side—to go and apply themselves hopefully and courageously to the task of getting their daily food instead of standing listlessly and apathetically in face of a situation which, apart from the aid of the Unseen, is wholly beyond their control.

The general principle at work in this simple instance is also evident in connection with the savage's attitude to the killing of wild animals.

Without such killing the savage cannot live, or at

<sup>1</sup> R. R. Marett, *Sacraments of Simple Folk*, p. 26.

least, cannot live well. On the other hand, killing what he cannot himself produce for his necessary sustenance, is for him a suicidal practice. Besides, as living creatures, wild animals have a certain recognised kinship with the savage ; it is only with compunction that he destroys his admired rivals in strength, speed, and cunning. But, how, then, is he to resolve the contradiction between the necessity to kill in order to eat and the desire to let his quarry live ?

In such feasts of multiplication as those studied by Spencer and Gillen in Central Australia, the savage eats very sparingly and at the same time prays that the animals on whom he depends for his food, may increase abundantly.<sup>1</sup> Apparently his aim in eating so sparingly is to apologise or to ask pardon in advance for what is after all the unavoidable wrong of killing. Likewise, by interceding for the multiplication of the animals which he kills, he contrives to suggest his trust that he will not be grudged his comparatively small portion out of the great abundance for which he prays. Seeing that he is thus striving to do all that he can to further mana's good work, surely mana may be relied upon to suffer long and be kind.

The savage's attempt to get into friendly touch with mana and so to secure its kindly co-operation might be illustrated further by reference to a whole series of rites whose object is to secure supernatural help for such diverse activities as fighting, mating, educating, ruling, judging, covenanting, healing, and dying. But it is unnecessary to go into further detail here.<sup>2</sup> For present purposes what

<sup>1</sup> " When the witchetty-grub men of Central Australia have their stomachs rubbed with a stone representing their totem to the solemn words, ' You have eaten much food,' they actually eat nothing at all."

Marett, *Sacraments of Simple Folk*, p. 36, quoting from B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Arunta*, vol. i. pp. 147-49.

<sup>2</sup> For details see Marett, *op. cit.*

we have to note is that, according to a great mass of anthropological evidence, *mana* is conceived as being essentially a moral or spiritual force akin in nature to the moral and spiritual force which the savage finds to be operative in himself. In certain quarters this force is held to be an impersonal one;<sup>1</sup> yet it always belongs to persons to originate its operation, and when it works either for the savage's benefit or to his disadvantage, it does so with the helpfulness or the hindrance of an agent, not with the usefulness of an instrument or the thwarting power of a blind adversity. Thus from the beginning there is a tendency to conceive *mana* in personal terms, and we find that, in so far as this tendency gradually works itself out, the savage gradually comes to believe not merely in an over-ruling *mana*, but in a *mana* which is more or less vaguely individualised. For example, in a god called "Engai" the Masai personify the influence to which they refer all forms of fertility. "Give us a good year!" they cry to him, meaning this summary petition to cover children, grass, cattle, and probably also loot.<sup>2</sup> In similar fashion the Yuin worship a god called "Daramulun," who is the personification of all the wonders of external nature, who brings about the miracle of human birth, who is also the primal legislator, going everywhere and seeing everything.<sup>3</sup> Among the Omaha, *wakanda*, the element of mystery in the world, is personified in certain contexts as "The Great Spirit" and "The Master of Life."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians*, p. 119, quoted by Marett, *Sacraments of Simple Folk*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> A. C. Hollis, *The Masai*, p. 347, quoted by Marett, *op. cit.* p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> A. W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of S.E. Australia*, p. 358, quoted by Marett, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> A. C. Fletcher and F. LaFlesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, in report 27 of the Bureau of American Ethnology, quoted by Marett, *Sacraments of Simple Folk*, p. 138.

These typical facts are important for us in several ways. In the first place, they confirm our view that the individual begins with a vague apprehension of the presence of mind in the world beyond him ; for, if this were not so, the savage would be utterly unable to think of the incalculable variations in the world's events as being caused by living agency. In the second place, they illustrate the contention that this agency is conceived in personal terms through an essentially inferential process ; for it is on the analogy of his own self-consciousness that the savage interprets the spontaneity found in nature as due to the spontaneous action of supernatural individuals. Thirdly, they provide an interesting instance of what has been said about the possibility of religious error ;<sup>1</sup> for it is by basing his thought of the personal character of his gods on insufficient data that the savage falls into what, from a more comprehensive point of view, can only be regarded as crude anthropomorphic blunders. No doubt the inference by which the savage initially passes from the observation of activity in nature to belief in its causation by supernatural agents is so confirmed for him by his limited experience that, so long as it remains limited, he is able to maintain his relatively crude ways of thinking about the Unseen. As already remarked,<sup>2</sup> his faith actually does help him to face life successfully ; it allays his fears, it strengthens his hopes, and it stimulates his energies. But were his experience to be broadened and deepened as it has been for the modern European, his present conception of the Unseen would have to be radically altered. Such as it is, it can be explained if we presuppose in the savage the twin tendency to look for evidence of the presence of mind everywhere and, on the analogy of his own self-consciousness, to personalise the

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 74-75.<sup>2</sup> See p. 78.

mental forces of which he finds evidence in their effects on material facts and processes.

Such elements in the religion of the savage as animism, fetishism, hero-worship, and the worship of the dead may be passed over for two reasons. In the first place, on account of the wide range and great complexity of the given facts, the religion of the savage can be discussed here only in its barest outlines. Secondly, as will be conceded by those acquainted with the facts, animism, fetishism and the rest are most simply and naturally explained by the sort of anthropomorphic theory of knowledge which has been expounded above. If our theory of knowledge demonstrates how it is possible for the savage to come to believe in the existence of supernatural spirits, it remains the task of the anthropologist rather than the epistemologist to trace in detail the various ways whereby these spirits are gradually conceived as a hierarchy in which the savage's gods, as distinguished from ancestral spirits and an ignoble crowd of fetishes, fairies, and hobgoblins, "increase steadily in personality and in a corresponding will to have their own way." <sup>1</sup>

## 2. PREHISTORIC RELIGION

At first sight it may seem that, in turning from the religion of the savage to the religion of prehistoric man, we are taking a strange backward leap from the primitive to the still more primitive. If, however, it is true that the religion of prehistoric man almost certainly had in it at one time even cruder elements than are to be found now in the religion of the savage, it is also true that since prehistoric man was the ancestor of those who are now

<sup>1</sup> Marett, *Faith, Hope, and Charity in Primitive Religion*, p. 11. Cf. also p. 107.

civilised as well as of those to whom civilisation is still unknown, the religion of the savage must be in many respects inferior to at least the higher forms of religion attained by his remote forefathers. Even if we suppose that the advances of the more cultured sections of the human race were originally due to help given straight from heaven, we must also suppose that those to whom such help was given were capable of receiving it and profiting by it, whereas the modern savage seems to have lost the capacity for self-improvement altogether.

The question arises, "What were those elements in the religion of prehistoric man which raised him higher than the modern savage?"

Since our knowledge of the savage is a very unsafe clue to the interpretation of the ideas connected with such relics of prehistoric man as still remain, this question is a baffling one. In answering it, we are as liable to go astray as the archæologist would be five centuries hence if all records of present-day Christianity were now destroyed, and he was asked to interpret our current theological doctrines from the remains of our churches alone. In the supposed circumstances the anthropologist might well write, says Gwatkin, that "these people were unquestionably polytheists. We find some difference of North and South, but everywhere the chief gods were a woman with a child, or a crucified man whose relation to them is uncertain. There are also traces of many lesser gods, of whom some are represented as put to death by violence. The idea of crucifixion seems to have had a fascination for them, to judge by the form of their buildings and the numerous crosses and crucifixes which remain. As they were fairly civilised, we can hardly suppose that they worshipped criminals. The evidence points rather to an



extensive personification of natural forces in their ceaseless conflict. Thus the woman with the child may be Mother Earth, or better, perhaps, the Cornmaiden; while the crucified man may represent some solar myth of light overcome by the powers of darkness, and the minor gods will stand for other myths of a similar sort.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, if we are liable to make such blunders as this in trying to interpret the religious ideas of our prehistoric ancestors, it would be the height of absurdity to offer anything but the most tentative suggestions concerning the mental processes by which those ideas were originally conceived. We confine ourselves therefore to two general remarks.

(i) The fact that prehistoric man did not perish is sufficient evidence that he had the ability to adapt himself more or less successfully to his environment. This implies on his part some apprehension of the uniformity of nature, while what we have already called “the incalculable element in life” may have prompted him to ascribe—as there seems to be some reason to suppose that he did ascribe<sup>2</sup>—all changes not caused by his own agency to the action of other wills or spirits like his own, resident in or embodied in the things around him. Possibly his felt helplessness in the face of striking events such as storms or earthquakes was the factor in his experience which prompted him further to think of some spirits at work in the world as being particularly “strong” or “supernatural.” And if prehistoric man thus came to believe in the existence of supernatural spirits, we need not jump to the conclusion that he thought of them with unmixed fear. On the contrary, in view of the fact that his religion not only survived but developed ulti-

<sup>1</sup> *The Knowledge of God*, vol. i. p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> Gwatkin, *op. cit.* p. 261.

mately into something even higher and better than the religion of the modern savage—from which, as we have seen, trustful dependence on the Unseen is by no means absent—we may conclude that on the whole prehistoric man looked up to the powers above him as to his friends.

So far, some such theory of knowledge as the one maintained here is necessary for the explanation of the facts. If prehistoric man had begun with no knowledge of mind other than his own, he would have had no basis for the inference by which he interpreted a multitude of different events in the external world as being due to the agency of beings akin in nature to himself. It is true that whereas, in the case of events due to human agency, this inference was amply confirmed by ordinary intersubjective intercourse, in inferring from specially striking events and processes the existence behind them of superhuman agencies like himself, prehistoric man had all-too-abundant opportunity for falling into error. The crudeness of his anthropomorphism had to give way gradually, as, in course of time, his control over his physical environment increased and he came more and more to regard certain objects in the external world not as having an independent mental life of their own, but rather as means and instruments for the fulfilment of human purposes. But, in saying that the crudeness of prehistoric man's anthropomorphism had to give way gradually, it is not implied either that it was ever unsound in principle or that the theory of knowledge which covers it can now be discarded. The projection of the self into the external world is still involved in our own thinking whenever we speak of things as exerting force or as offering resistance, or even as existing and persisting with a unity and identity of their own independent of our perception of them; it lies at the basis of any metaphysic which attempts to

explain reality as a causally-connected whole ; in particular, it provides the ground not only for the earliest and lowliest conceptions of supernatural spirits, but also for the most highly developed thought of God as a Personal Being Whom we may trust, love, and obey as our heavenly Father.

(ii) There is some reason to believe that a general element in the life of prehistoric man was the system now called "totemism." Thus in many districts of America, Australia, Africa, India, and Melanesia, totemism is found as a survival from prehistoric times. It is true that "over a large area of the globe embracing Europe, the greater part of Asia, South America, Polynesia, the North of Africa, and the extreme North of North America, inhabited by the Eskimo, totemism is now unknown. But among many of the peoples of these regions certain beliefs and practices have been reported which seem to bear traces of its former prevalence." <sup>1</sup>

Now the central feature of totemism is, and presumably was, a recognised community of nature between the members of any given clan and every individual instance of the clan's totem, whether animal or plant, or—more rarely—what is to us an inanimate thing. This fact requires for its explanation both an initial apprehension on the part of man of the existence of mind in the world beyond him and a tendency to infer from the observed behaviour of this, that, and the other interesting object the presence in these objects of mind in embodied forms. It is true that when we ask what first made the members of any given clan specially interested in the animal or plant finally adopted as its totem, experts differ about the proper answer. According to Sir J. G. Frazer,<sup>2</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> E. Sidney Hartland, article on "Totemism" in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted *ibid.*

answer is to be found in the fact that a prehistoric mother, feeling herself pregnant for the first time in the neighbourhood of an animal or plant, may have sprung to the conclusion that a spirit embodied in that plant or animal had entered her womb, and that thus her offspring and all the members of the species of animal or plant with which she connected her pregnancy were of one blood. According to Durkheim,<sup>1</sup> each group of prehistoric men took as its totem the animal or vegetable diffused most plentifully in the neighbourhood of the place where the group was accustomed to assemble, the totem being implicitly regarded as the material form in which the omnipresent mind, spirit or mana embodied itself. But for present purposes this puzzle may be left unsolved. All we need to stress is that the recognised presence of the common spirit of a totemite group in concrete individuals implies at least some basis of implicit inference whereby prehistoric man passed from his vague apprehension of mind in general in the world beyond him to the apprehension of other beings akin in nature to himself. The basis of inference may have been chance-associations such as Frazer describes, or it may have been the mere sharing in the common life of a specific district as maintained by Durkheim.

In referring in particular to totemism as an element in the life of prehistoric man, we do not suggest that it played an invariable—or even a prominent—part in the development of early religion. Whether that was the case or not remains uncertain. On the other hand, totemism had in it the beginnings of later polytheistic and also monotheistic beliefs, and therefore it deserves special attention. It was natural that one totemite-group coming into contact with another totemite-group should

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, *ibid.*

be led to conceive the spirit embodied in its members as a distinct entity or group-god. With the union of clans came the multiplication of recognised deities, of whom one might take precedence over the rest in virtue of his being the god of the dominant clan in the union. This does not mean any more than that from the first there must have been a tendency for the gods of prehistoric man to arrange themselves into hierarchies; but, inasmuch as one god might win greater glory than another, and—by reason of the victories of his devotees over their neighbours—might finally come to be recognised as supreme over all rivals, we may say that already there was dawning faintly on heathen darkness the light which, in course of time, led men to the recognition of the only real God. How the light shone more and more unto the perfect day we have still to trace in the chapters which follow.

## CHAPTER IX

### GREEK RELIGION

IT was a Greek who remarked with gentle irony that when a Greek spoke of Greeks and Barbarians, it was as if a crow should speak of crows and other birds. A similar criticism would be true in many respects of that other ancient division of the human race according to which men were either Jews or Gentiles. Yet, in the sphere of religion, this latter classification of mankind has a good deal to be said in its favour. History proves that in pre-Christian days the Jews did have such an apprehension of the nature and will of God as in course of time attested itself to be on the whole much superior to the notions of Him entertained by other races. Indeed, so great were Moses and the prophets that even Jesus Christ came only in order to "fulfil" them. So far as the ancient world is concerned, therefore, we may accept the division of mankind into Jews and Gentiles, first of all trying to trace the development of religion among the Gentiles, and proceeding to a discussion of the great forerunner of Christianity.

To try to trace the development of religion among the Gentiles in a detailed way would be to attempt an enormous task of overwhelming difficulty. All that is possible within the scope of this essay is to illustrate its main contention with regard to the character of religious knowledge by giving a brief survey of Gentile religion as represented by the faith of the Greeks—the Greeks being chosen because, as Sir Gilbert Murray says, they had "the

triumphant if tragic distinction of beginning at the very bottom and struggling, however precariously, to the very summits." <sup>1</sup>

### I. EARLY RITUAL

The earliest known form of Greek religion was cult or ritual. Like the modern savage, the ancient Greek recognised that while there was a certain uniformity in nature to which he could adapt himself successfully, there was also an incalculable element which might do him harm or do him good. This incalculable element he interpreted on the analogy of his own felt spontaneity as being due to some unseen power or mana,<sup>2</sup> and he naturally made it his business—by such practical means as suggested themselves to him—to placate mana so far as it might be hostile to him, and to secure its favour so far as it might be able and willing to help him. Thus his fears, his hopes, and his desires were given expression in various forms of cult, the object of which was to appease unfriendly mana (by offering it gifts) or to persuade friendly mana to do for him what he wanted (by displaying his dependence upon it and his need for its blessing).

Now, from the outset mana was closely associated with living beings. It was in virtue of having mana within himself that the early Greek was able to do unusual feats of strength or valour, and likewise it was mana which accounted for the special deadliness or fertility or vitality of certain animals. Hence there was always a tendency to conceive mana as an agent, not as a mere instrument or impersonal force. And this tendency was confirmed and furthered by other factors; for, in the

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The word "mana" is used here merely because of its convenience. It is not, of course, a Greek word.

first place, in ancient Greece—as elsewhere among primitive people—it was easiest to imagine a personal cause for any striking phenomenon, and, secondly, a crowd of uncivilised folk moved by a common fear or desire was apt to conceive the object of its fear or desire in personal terms. If there was a great storm of wind, the storm was thought to be the work of some more or less human—and, of course, superhuman—agent who was blowing with his cheeks. Again, the emotion of youths dancing a magic dance in order to hasten the return of spring was projected into, or personified as, Spring Incarnate.<sup>1</sup>

We find that, as the result of these various tendencies to personify the mana with which the early Greeks were concerned in their religious ritual, their festivals included references to vaguely conceived supernatural powers or deities whom, in their fear of death or in their desire for the great blessings of food and progeny, they sought either to propitiate or to cajole. Clearly, they could never have attained to the thought of these deities at all if they had not initially apprehended their own mental life as continuous in existence and nature with a mental life immeasurably transcending it; and although, as we can see now, the grounds of the implicit inference by which they first passed from partial apprehension of mind in general to belief in the existence of anthropomorphic gods were insufficient to justify their belief, that could become evident to them only as their experience gradually broadened and deepened. Trial and failure were among the first, as they shall be among the last conditions of success in laying hold upon the nature and will of God.

In order to illustrate the general process just described,

<sup>1</sup> For striking examples of the personification of the objects of collective emotions in such beings as the Megistos Kouros and the Year-Dæmon, see Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, pp. 28 and 32.



we may refer to the three great festivals of early Athens : the Diasia, the Thesmophoria, and the Anthesteria.<sup>1</sup>

In the Diasia an attempt was made to propitiate the powers of the underworld, who were wont to carry men away from the fair face of the earth to live with them in their ghostly habitation. To this end a sacrifice was offered to the dead, and the shuddering generated by the ritual gave rise to the thought of a supernatural power or god called Meilichios, "He of Appeasement," in whose presence it was natural to quake. The vagueness of the emotion felt in the Diasia was doubtless responsible for the vague way in which Meilichios was at first conceived as the object of it ; but later he was represented in a very definite form as an enormous snake, the regular symbol of the powers of the underworld. Later still, when men had lost some of their fear of death and death-dealing agencies, he was represented as a benevolent father. In short, on the basis of certain observed facts and the emotions connected with them it was inferred that mind was embodied in individual form in Meilichios, and Meilichios gradually changed his character in accordance with his worshippers' changing ideas about death and its terrors.

The blessings which the Greeks in common with other early peoples tried to secure from above, consisted primarily in food and progeny.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly we find in the Thesmophoria and the Anthesteria attempts to stimulate or further those generative processes over which mana alone exercised control. (i) In the Thesmophoria

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, i. pp. 14 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt*, p. 32, where Wallis Budge says, "The wants of the Egyptian savage were relatively few and may perhaps be summed up in three words—food, women, and progeny ; and his early mysteries, ritual and drama were devoted to providing himself with these fundamental necessities of existence."

women carried fir-cones, snakes,<sup>1</sup> and unnameable objects made of paste in order to secure fertility ; pigs, remarkable for their powers of procreation, were sacrificed and thrown into a deep cleft in the earth, and their remains afterwards collected and scattered as a charm over the fields ; and out of all this charm-bearing there sprang an imaginary Charm-bearer, Thesmophoros, who was later associated with Demeter and her daughter Kore. (ii) In the Anthesteria, as in the Diasia, means were adopted for appeasing the dead ; and when innumerable ghosts had been summoned out of their tombs, duly feasted and ushered back again in good mood to the place from which they had come, the god of the Anthesteria was married to the wife of his worshippers' king—apparently in order to secure that the appeased dead should be happily brought to life again in large numbers. Since the marriage was held in a place called the Boukolion or Bull's Shed, we may infer that the god was originally a divine bull held in awe and admiration because of his superhuman vigour. But, whether this was so or not, he gradually developed into an anthropomorphic deity, and in classical times was none other than the Olympian Dionysus.

In the Thesmophoria and Anthesteria, then, as in the Diasia, though the boons asked for were purely material, the worshippers acknowledged both their dependence on and their trust in the supernatural. It was not they themselves who made the crops to grow, the lambs to reappear in the fields, and their own numbers to increase ; it was mana, mind or spirit which did so. Various factors in experience prompted the further thought that this omnipresent mana was individualised in certain more or

<sup>1</sup> Besides being a symbol of the powers of the underworld, the snake was a symbol of fertility because he could throw off his old skin and thus renew himself.

less human and also superhuman beings. And these beings progressively changed their characters as newly-discovered truths forced their worshippers to revise their old ideas.

## 2. THE OLYMPIAN CONQUEST

A great change was wrought in the life and thought of the original inhabitants of Greece by the coming of the Hellenes or Achæans, one of the many tribes of predatory northmen who swept down towards the Ægean Sea at the dawn of Greek history.

These Hellenes were little better than wild savages ; but, in virtue of their conquest of Greece, which was more or less complete before the end of the thirteenth century before Christ,<sup>1</sup> they enjoyed great prestige. Those whom they had conquered, gradually became proud to imitate their manners and even to adopt their names. In course of time, the very Ionians—the descendants of those who had fled from the invading northmen across the sea—began to look back on what had really been an age of violence, as on an age of chivalry and splendid adventure. They forgot the evil of the past and idealised the good. Coming into contact with the comparatively uncivilised tribes of the Asiatic mainland, they despised these tribes as their moral and social inferiors. And so there finally emerged a fully self-conscious “ Hellenic ” race, knit together by a distinctive historical and cultural tradition and clearly marked off from surrounding “ Barbarians.”<sup>2</sup>

So far as religion was concerned, the coming of the Hellenes to the Greek mainland meant the coming of new gods ; for, while the observance of the old rites connected

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Myres, *The Dawn of History*, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> The process was complete by the reign of Pisistratus. See Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 42.

with the food-supply and the tribe-supply lingered long in backward areas, the superhuman beings worshipped by the conquering northmen gradually ousted or absorbed aboriginal deities wherever the prestige of the conquerors was high. Zeus, for example, the sky-god of the Achæans, expelled old Kronos ; his son, later called Apollo, assimilated the characteristics of the chief deity of Delos and a similar deity of Delphi ; and his daughter, a warrior-maiden, became identified with the local goddess of Athens.

Now—as we expect to find in accordance with our theory of the character of religious knowledge—because Zeus, Apollo, Athena and the rest were the deities of a conquering race, they were thought of as being themselves conquerors, whose main business was to fight and feast and frolic, with lordly disdain for such hum-drum affairs as looking after their subjects' fields or maintaining law and order amongst them. It is true that they were also supposed to destroy the harvests of those who offended them, and to blast with thunderbolts the folk who were so impious as to break their oaths. But this latter fact only supplies additional confirmation of our theory ; for even while the Hellenes were engaged in the stirring task of conquering the Greek world, they still retained some vestiges of the functions which they had exercised in more normal and settled times, and accordingly so did their gods. The principle at work throughout is that the gods were conceived on the analogy of the self-consciousness of their worshippers, alterations in the worshippers' self-consciousness or experience of life accounting for alterations in their inferences as to the nature of the powers above them.

It was in accordance with the same principle that the Olympians developed new and nobler traits in succeeding

centuries.<sup>1</sup> For one thing, as human morality improved, the poets who sang of the gods to their aristocratic masters felt themselves obliged to abolish such traits in the traditional characters of the gods as were intolerable, and to idealise such as were not. Further, the needs of a new social order in which the old tribal system was gradually replaced by the growth of city-states including representatives of many different tribes, tended to make men think of the gods as not being confined to this or that little locality, but as being ready to act as patrons of all. Thirdly, the surmounting of narrow local barriers, together with a steadily increasing desire to find some sort of intellectual order in religion, furthered the process whereby many originally different deities were absorbed into one another. Hence when Homer and Hesiod "composed theogonies, and gave the gods their epithets, allotted them their several offices and occupations, and described their forms,"<sup>2</sup> an enormous advance had been made on the religious beliefs of the Age of the Achæan Migrations, and the pre-Hellenic rites, described in the preceding section of this chapter, had been done away with altogether except in the dark haunts of superstition and vice as yet untouched by the full light of the new civilisation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The "Olympians" were so called because, wherever their worshippers moved, they were supposed to dwell on the highest mountain in the neighbourhood. See Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *History of Herodotus*, Book 2, ch. 53, translated by Rawlinson.

<sup>3</sup> We may note, as a particularly instructive instance of this religious development, the history of Hermes (Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 55).

Originally, Hermes was simply an old upright stone furnished with the regular Pelasgian sex-symbol of pro-creation. Set up over a tomb, he was regarded as the power generating new lives or bringing back the souls of the dead, the messenger between the world seen and the world unseen. But this phallic stone was quite unsuitable

## 3. THE FAILURE OF OLYMPIANISM

During the fifth and sixth centuries before Christ Greek civilisation advanced with astonishing speed. In particular, it is almost impossible to exaggerate the intense intellectual activity of the period. Beginning with the rough and ready system of mensuration taught them by Egypt, the Greeks soon put the study of arithmetic and geometry on a scientific basis, and pursued it with remarkable success. Remarkable results were also achieved in astronomy and medicine. And, not content with such wonderful attainments as these, the curious-minded proceeded to speculate systematically on æsthetic and moral problems, the art of government, and the relation of the world of "becoming" or sensible experience to the world of "being" or unchanging reality.

Inevitably, these advances in life and thought were accompanied by a growing dissatisfaction with the Olympian religion. No doubt it had been an improvement on the crude beliefs and practices which it had superseded; but, to thinking men anxious to discover some principle of unity in the world in which they lived, its polytheism was of no value as an account of the forces initiating and controlling observed events. Similarly, though the Olympian system had aimed at and had in

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for Homer's purposes. A phallic stone was not decent and hardly even human, and every personage in the Homeric poems had to be both. Hence in the *Iliad* Hermes was simply removed, and Iris, the rainbow-goddess, took his place as messenger between heaven and earth. In the *Odyssey* he was so changed that nothing of his original characteristics remained in the beautiful and gracious youth who succeeded him as herald of the gods. In other words, a gradual improvement in human life had gradually produced, by way of more or less conscious inference, an improvement in men's conception of the Divine Nature.

some respects brought about a better morality, the Olympians themselves—associated as they had been with innumerable local deities belonging to a more primitive age—were generally thought of as behaving in ways which cultured members of society could no longer regard as other than childish or disgraceful. Nay, Olympianism failed even as an attempt to satisfy the religious needs of the city-state; for the Olympians did not belong to any particular city, and therefore no particular city had any positive faith in them.

It is difficult to say how far and how fast loss of faith in the Olympians extended; but, among at least the educated classes of Greece, there was no serious belief in them by the beginning of the fourth century before Christ. It is true that Socrates was put to death on a charge of irreligion in 399 B.C. Socrates' irreligion, however, whatever it was, was not mere disbelief in the stories told about the gods. By that time, says Burnet, "it was not likely that any educated man believed these stories. There was no church and no priesthood, and therefore the conception of religious orthodoxy did not exist. So far as mythology was concerned, you might take any liberty. No one appears to have found fault with Æschylus for his 'Prometheus,' though, judged by modern standards, it is flat blasphemy. Aristophanes does not scruple to make fun of Zeus himself, and he represents Dionysus as a vulgar poltroon in a comedy which was actually part of the service of that very god, and was presided over by his priest." <sup>1</sup>

The failure of Olympianism is a particularly interesting

<sup>1</sup> *Greek Philosophy—Thales to Plato*, p. 183. Cf. the way in which ridicule of the gods affected the development of religion in ancient Egypt. "The native myths and legends of the gods of the Egyptians show that at a very early period men regarded them as a class of beings who were in many respects like themselves, who possessed

instance of the way in which men, in accordance with newly-discovered facts, alter inferences previously made concerning the nature of that mind in the world beyond them of which they have a partial apprehension from the outset of their existence ; for the failure of Olympianism was due not merely to an explicit awareness, but to the explicit recognition that old beliefs were no longer being confirmed by the advance of experience. What had been essentially hypotheses set up to account for certain aspects of human life—albeit set up mainly in order to satisfy practical, not theoretical interests—were now seen to be hypotheses so crudely anthropomorphic in nature that reflective men were forced to reject them. And this rejection was followed—as our general theory leads us to expect—not by timid acceptance of the idea that past errors proved all religious beliefs and practices to be erroneous and worthless, but by new attempts to think of the Unseen and Eternal, as revealed in and through the seen and temporal, in satisfactory ways. Plato, reflecting on the nature of the world and of man, came to the conclusion that over all there was a Supreme Soul, and that certain truths about Him could be strictly demonstrated. The Stoics, rejecting the errors of a discredited anthropomorphism, yet regarding the world as a system exhibiting an over-ruling purpose, spoke of a divine Heimarmene which ran like a thread through the whole of existence.<sup>1</sup> Even Epicurus, whose main concern was to teach his neighbours to fear nothing either from gods or

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the same virtues and vices as themselves, and committed acts of folly like men and women. The lapses of the gods and goddesses, moral or otherwise, did not stir men to anger, but did provoke men to regard them with a sort of kindly and good-humoured ridicule ” —that is, when men had learned to laugh at the gross social customs of a bygone age. Wallis Budge, *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt*, p. 23.

<sup>1</sup> Zeno, quoted by Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 134.



men, did not profess atheism ; he only said that God was a blessed being, and that as such He neither suffered evil nor inflicted it on others, but left men and their petty concerns to themselves.

#### 4. PLATO'S THEOLOGY

Plato's theology—which we are bound to discuss at some length because of its great importance in the development of Greek religion—was expounded in his last years in the tenth book of “ The Laws ” in an attempt to refute three current theories which Plato regarded as having a pernicious effect on practical conduct : namely, the doctrine that there are no gods at all ; the doctrine that if there are gods, they are indifferent to men's affairs ; and, worst of all, the doctrine that those who offended them, can escape their anger by offering them sacrificial gifts.<sup>1</sup>

The first of these doctrines, said Plato, is the result of combining the idea of the early Ionian scientists that the order of nature can be accounted for without reference to the action of mind,<sup>2</sup> and the idea of the Sophists that moral distinctions, having no objective validity, are purely conventional in character.<sup>3</sup> If atheism is to be refuted, it is necessary to show both that all physical processes are ultimately due to logically prior movements of mind or souls,<sup>4</sup> and that the souls controlling the world not only are good souls, but also have a Perfect Soul at their head.<sup>5</sup>

In order to establish these points Plato proceeded to describe ten different forms of motion ; but all that we need concern ourselves with at present is the distinction between motion which is communicated, and motion

<sup>1</sup> *The Laws*, para. 885 b.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* paras. 889 e–890 a.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* para. 897 c.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* para. 889 c.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* para. 892 c.

which is spontaneous.<sup>1</sup> Communicated motion, Plato argued, always presupposes motion which is spontaneous ; <sup>2</sup> and motion which is spontaneous is found only in the soul, so that movements of souls are the ultimate causes of all other movements.<sup>3</sup>

Now, there are movements in the world which are irregular and bad.<sup>4</sup> This means that we must presuppose at least one evil soul in the world, and there may be many more.<sup>5</sup> But order in the world is far more in evidence than disorder. In particular, there is the perfectly regular motion of the heavens. Hence it follows that good souls exist as the authors of good movements, and that over them all, as supreme controller of the heavens, there is One Who is perfect.<sup>6</sup>

Plato's argument—which, incidentally, reveals him as the creator of philosophical theism—is of particular interest for our present purpose ; for though it is widely separated from the anthropomorphic crudities which we have been considering, it also is covered by our main theory concerning the character of religious knowledge.

To begin with, Plato's theology is based on the assumption that we begin with an apprehension of mind akin in nature to our own in the world beyond us. At any rate, it is only the making of this assumption which logically justifies Plato in arguing that because the movements of our own bodies are initiated by prior movements of our souls, the movements of bodies other than our own must be initiated likewise. For even supposing

<sup>1</sup> *The Laws*, para. 894 b.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* para. 894 d.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* paras. 895 a–896 c.

<sup>4</sup> In all probability Plato referred to various apparent anomalies in the motions of the planets, and also to such things as earthquakes, floods, famines, and pestilences. See A. E. Taylor, *Plato—the Man and his Work*, p. 492.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* para. 896 e.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* para. 898 c.

that we were to admit that a man confined from the beginning to knowledge of his own mind in an otherwise purely material world might reach a position in which he could say that if the movements of bodies other than his own were his own movements, they would be movements due to the spontaneous activity of souls like his,<sup>1</sup> nevertheless, if such a man were to go on to say that these movements, *not* being movements of his own body, were in fact due to the spontaneous activity of souls like his, his inference would be an extremely precarious one. He would be neglecting the possibility that in a world in which, *ex hypothesi*, his mind was for him an isolated mental fact, movements other than his own were determined by purely material conditions. To hold, as Plato did, that communicated motion always presupposes motion which is spontaneous, is to hold that from the outset we apprehend the external world not as a self-contained material system, but as a world pervaded by the presence of mind. And, when this is granted, it becomes entirely legitimate to go on to argue in accordance with appropriate evidence that certain particular movements are due to the activities of mind in individual forms.

The evidence which Plato adduced as sufficient for refuting atheism, was the movement of the outermost heavens, in which—from the point of view of his astronomy—there was no irregularity. Since this movement carries all other movements with it, and since it is the indispensable condition of our learning to understand nature and live an ordered life, it must be, Plato maintained, the work of a Perfect Mind.

<sup>1</sup> In making this supposition we are setting aside for the moment the difficulty of seeing how, in the supposed circumstances, the thought of other minds could even arise.

At this point the question arises for us whether there may not be, in as yet unknown parts of the universe, no such order as Plato saw from his limited point of view.

The answer, of course, is that there may be no such order. On the other hand, it is at least the assumption on which the development of all science and philosophy depends that there is order everywhere, if only we can discover it. And when we take into consideration not only the vast amount of order which has actually been discovered through first making this assumption, but also the enormous number of independent conditions which have been fulfilled in order to make possible the very emergence of the human intelligence which has discovered that vast amount of order, we are forced to conclude that though Plato's argument may not amount to a demonstration of the existence of a Perfect Mind, nevertheless it has an overwhelming balance of probability in its favour.

Having refuted atheism, Plato proceeded to deal with the doctrines that God is indifferent to the affairs of men, and that His just anger against evil-doers may be averted by giving Him bribes. With regard to the first, he held that if God is indifferent to the affairs of men, the reason must be either that he is unable to look after everything or that He deliberately neglects men's affairs as trifles unworthy of His notice. We may reject the former alternative at once, it was argued, on the ground that—as already proved—God's power is perfect; but the latter alternative is no better. Even doctors, pilots, generals and statesmen know that they cannot succeed in any great enterprise if they neglect what appear to be unimportant details, and God can be neither inferior to human beings in the ability to take pains with a given task nor so lazy or cowardly that He will not do what He

sees ought to be done.<sup>1</sup> As for the suggestion that God's just anger against evil-doers may be averted by giving Him bribes, this is downright blasphemy, and merits nothing but contempt. Surely God is better than the shepherd would be who was prepared to allow wolves to tear his flock in pieces on condition that he received some of the plunder.<sup>2</sup>

It will be observed that these latter arguments are as markedly anthropomorphic in character as Plato's primary argument against pure atheism. This is what we expect to find in accordance with our view that God is gradually apprehended as akin in nature to, if also immeasurably higher than, the human self. On the other hand, when Plato argued from the nature of good men to the moral perfection of God, he made a scientific use of observation and explicitly drawn inference which is relatively uncommon amongst believers, and we must stress this point in case there should be any misunderstanding of what we mean by saying that the ordinary believer's knowledge of God is initially inferential in principle. The simple-minded Christian whose first trembling trust in God is progressively changed into unshakeable conviction by a long series of immediately-experienced mercies, is in a very different position from that occupied by the philosopher who tests the validity of the idea of God by reflective analysis; yet it is the simple-minded Christian rather than the philosopher who is typical of the devout as a whole. In maintaining that the ordinary believer's knowledge of God is initially inferential in principle, we are not maintaining that his use of reason in religion is the philosophical use of it; our contention is merely that there is no genuine apprehension of God, as there is no knowledge of human beings,

<sup>1</sup> *The Laws*, para. 903 a.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* paras. 905-907 d.

apart from some interpretation of observed facts which is at first tentative, and requires to be verified by the results to which it leads. In explicitly interpreting observed facts for others and thus giving them notions of God which they can act upon and verify—explicitly or implicitly—in their own practical experience, the religious geniuses of the race are fulfilling a special task and putting us all for ever in their debt.

### 5. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Though the thoughts of great thinkers are sooner or later determining factors in the practice of their fellow-men, Plato's lofty speculations about God had little immediate effect on the religious life of Greece.<sup>1</sup> This was natural; for even if Plato's speculations could have been taught to the masses, the masses would have held them to be disproved by the actual course of events in the fourth and succeeding centuries before Christ. The rise of Macedon spelt the complete collapse of the city-state. War waged on a grand scale transformed the face of the world. In trying to spread its thought rapidly and superficially over vast semi-barbarous populations whose minds were not ready to receive it, Greek civilisation itself rapidly became corrupt. Later still, the very power of Rome failed to establish a reign of happiness

<sup>1</sup> Cf. what Sir E. Wallis Budge says about the monotheism evolved by the priests of Memphis under the Old Kingdom in Egypt some 5000 years ago. "It is extremely improbable that such a highly philosophical system as the theology of Memphis ever became popular in Egypt. It in no way appealed to the working classes and peasants, and few outside the priesthood could ever have understood it. . . . The cults of the old fetish and cosmic gods continued to flourish. . . . Men preferred the worship of anthropomorphised fetishes whose attributes could be easily understood and whose nature and habits were believed to be very like their own." *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt*, p. 17.

for the race. And what could these things mean to the many, if not that, whatever the Power might be which was thus disturbing the world, it was not a Supreme Soul interested in man's affairs and caring for them as a shepherd cares for his sheep?

We do not need to follow in detail the catastrophes and transformations of the Hellenic period, because the effects which they wrought on the religious life and thought of Greece illustrate no principle concerning the character of religious knowledge which we have not already seen illustrated by the events of earlier times. Some of the Greeks attributed their varying fortunes to the operation of a personified Chance;<sup>1</sup> others, lifting up their thoughts from the disturbing events of the earth to the impressive phenomena of the sky, or turning their attention inward upon their own souls, sought there such evidence as might be found of the existence of the Divine.<sup>2</sup> Thus, on the one hand, the sun, the moon, and the stars became the gods of the multitudes who were thereby pre-disposed to welcome the astrological superstitions which came later from the East; on the other hand, emphasis on the divine element in the human soul led many more to deify great men,<sup>3</sup> or, on the grounds of their own ecstatic spiritual experiences, to deify themselves.<sup>4</sup> In short, in spite of the many complexities of thought and practice which characterised the period, its general trend

<sup>1</sup> A sentence from Pliny's *Natural History*, which seems to go back to Hellenistic sources, contains the words, "We are so much at the mercy of chance that Chance is our god." Quoted by Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. remark of Aristotle, quoted by Murray, *op. cit.* p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Alexander the Great. Murray gives many instances in point. See *op. cit.* pp. 153, et seq.

<sup>4</sup> Referring to the Gnostic movement, Murray says: "As we have always to keep reminding our cold, modern intelligence, he who has 'known' God, is himself thereby deified." *Op. cit.* p. 161.

was a reaction under oriental and barbarous influences to the most primitive pre-Hellenic cults ; and this means that although the Greeks began like other men with a vague apprehension of the presence of mind akin to and also transcending their own minds in the world beyond them, the events which they observed and their inner responses to these events were insufficient to enable them to rise to the conception of one, true, and living God. What might have happened if the Greek love of speculation had been combined with greater moral earnestness, we can only guess. As it was, it was left to the Hebrews—with their clearer perception of the practical importance of moral distinctions, and their consequent realisation that over all there must be a God of righteousness—to take the path which ultimately led to nobler thoughts about the Unseen and Eternal.



## CHAPTER X

### HEBREW RELIGION

THE writers of the Old Testament lived in a period extending over a thousand years. The period which they described was even longer. Further, early religious beliefs and practices were in many cases described from the points of view of much later dates. Thus, when we turn to the development of the knowledge of God in Old Testament times, we are confronted with a whole series of preliminary questions, such as, "What knowledge of God underlay the various beliefs and practices of the different eras described? How are we to arrive at this knowledge as distinguished from the religion of which it formed part? And, where contemporary records are not available, how are we to be sure that the knowledge of God ascribed to any particular period represents the knowledge actually possessed in that period, not the views of its subsequent chroniclers?"

So far as details are concerned, interpreters of the Old Testament naturally differ a great deal in their answers to such questions. Yet there is general agreement among them as to the main lines along which the knowledge of God developed in Old Testament times, and what they tell us about this development provides ample material for illustrating the contention that men begin with a vague apprehension of the presence of mind in the world, are prompted by various observed facts to infer the existence of supernatural minds akin in nature to their own, and—so far as they act on this inference—have

it so modified and so confirmed by their subsequent experience that, gradually they become sure of the existence of a Supreme Mind of infinite power, unsearchable wisdom, and perfect goodness.

### I. GOD KNOWN THROUGH NATURE

According to A. B. Davidson, there is no passage in the Old Testament which represents men as reaching the knowledge of the existence of God through nature or the events of providence ; at most, " there are some passages which imply that false ideas of what God is may be corrected by the observation of nature and life." <sup>1</sup> For example, when the psalmist says that the heavens declare God's glory,<sup>2</sup> all that he means is that the glory of God, Who is already known to him, may be seen reflected in the heavens ; but when God asks, " To whom will ye liken Me ? . . . Lift up your eyes on high, and see Who hath created these things," <sup>3</sup> it is implied that by the observation of nature false ideas of what God is may be corrected, or at least brought home to men's consciousness. Similarly, there is an approximation to the arguments of natural theology in the attack on the heathen rulers of Israel who say that the God of Israel takes no notice of their wickedness : " He that planted the ear, shall he not hear ? He that formed the eye, shall He not see ? He that instructeth the nations, shall He not correct ? " <sup>4</sup>

Now, at first sight, this opinion of A. B. Davidson, an eminent Old Testament scholar, is damaging for the theory that at least in some measure men attain their knowledge of God through inferences based on what they see taking place in the natural world. Even if it be granted that there is no passage in the Old Testament

<sup>1</sup> *The Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. xl. 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xix. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. xciv. 9-10.

which represents men as reaching the knowledge of the existence of God through nature, however, it by no means follows that in gaining their first vague apprehension of the existence of God the Hebrews were wholly uninfluenced by natural processes. When they entered their historic period they already believed in Yahweh as their tribal deity;<sup>1</sup> and how did they come to believe in Yahweh as their tribal deity if not by such steps as we have already seen to have been common among primitive peoples? Indeed, in proceeding to discuss the origin of the first conceptions of God among any people, Davidson himself affirms that "possibly in the main they originate in the impressions produced on man by the heavens in their various aspects. These aspects awaken feelings in man of a power above him, or it may be of many powers. This is probably the primary conception of God."<sup>2</sup> And, so far as this primary conception of God was subsequently modified or corrected, it was corrected at least in part "by the observation of nature."<sup>3</sup>

Passing from the primitive stage at which men came to believe in the existence of supernatural powers, then, we have to ask whether or not the Hebrews' apprehension of Yahweh—so far as it was affected by processes or events in the world of nature—developed in accordance

<sup>1</sup> It is true that the name Yahweh somehow received new currency and significance in connection with Israel from Moses; nevertheless it was older than the time of Moses. See A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 45, 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Compare the remarks of H. W. Robinson in *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*. On page 54 he says that "the Hebrew religion does not offer any elaborate reasonings to demonstrate the being of Yahweh; it accepts Him, just as the Moabites accepted Kemosh." But Robinson adds in a footnote that "ultimately, of course, belief in the supernatural involved some sort of inference from special experience." The specific grounds of such (implicit) inference are outlined. *Ibid.* pp. 102 et seq.

with our main contention as to the character of religious knowledge.

The play put upon the name Yahweh by Moses, namely, "Ehyeh asher Ehyeh," simply meant that to Moses's mind—stimulated into an analogical mode of thinking by the sight of a bush which apparently burned, yet was not consumed<sup>1</sup>—the God Who had been the God of his fathers would not desert His people in their time of distress in Egypt, but would thenceforth make His goodness more and more evident to them. Persuading his fellow-countrymen to share this belief in such fashion that they were willing to act on it, Moses attempted to lead them out of their bondage in Egypt; and when the attempt succeeded, when the Hebrews were also sustained throughout their lengthy wanderings in the wilderness of Sinai, and when finally they conquered Canaan and found room for themselves in what was to them "a land flowing with milk and honey," their faith was thereby confirmed that in Yahweh they had a beneficent Leader, a victory-giving Lord. No doubt at times and to a greater or smaller degree in the minds of individual Hebrews this faith was lost during the long interval between the exodus from Egypt and the settlement in Canaan; but their tribal experience as a whole left the great majority with little doubt that the belief on which they had acted, and by which they continued to act, was a sound one.

Now, naturally, the God Whose presence and power were thus held to be revealed in the victories of the Hebrews over their fellow-men in Egypt and Canaan, came to be thought of as being present and powerful in spheres of national interest much wider than that of the

<sup>1</sup> As the bush burned, so the Hebrews suffered in Egypt. As the bush was not consumed, so the Hebrews would be sustained by the goodness of Yahweh.

battlefield. Agricultural life in Canaan led to His being conceived as the Giver of the soil, the Producer of the crops, and the Inspirer of the farmer's skill.<sup>1</sup> The corn and wine and oil of the land were no doubt traced to the fertility of the earth, and this again to the rain from heaven ; but, looking for evidence of the presence of mind in the external world, the Hebrews asserted that the ultimate cause of the fertility of the earth and the rain from heaven must be the personal agency of their God. " The conquest of Canaan by the Israelites did not merely change their manner of life from the nomadic to the agricultural ; it also exercised a profound influence on their religion, and opened a realm, quite distinct from the battlefield, into which the sovereignty of Yahweh might be extended." <sup>2</sup>

With the passage of the centuries the sovereignty of Yahweh was extended further still. It is true that when Israel came into contact with the great powers of the ancient world, and these powers not only conquered her territory, but also carried off her people into slavery, it must have seemed to many an Israelite that Yahweh had been defeated by the gods of the Gentiles. This was indeed the inference of the foolish King Ahaz when defeated by the Syrians : " Because the Gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them that they may help me." <sup>3</sup> By this time, however, in spite of a long and frequently unsuccessful struggle against idolatry, the Israelites as a whole had been trained by their prophets to believe in no other God than Yahweh. With this Personal Power there had been much fellowship in prayer ; there had been much reverence for Him in the hearts of His own worshippers ; and in His felt presence

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxviii. 26.<sup>2</sup> H. W. Robinson, *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*, p. 57.<sup>3</sup> 2 Chron. xxviii. 23.

there had been such an immediately-experienced confirmation of their faith that, when outward disaster overtook them, they were by no means in the position of having their knowledge of God determined solely by the course of events in the external world.<sup>1</sup> Rather, their knowledge of God was applied by them to the explanation of their misfortunes. Had not prophet after prophet warned them that national misfortune would be their portion for their frequent forgetfulness of Yahweh, and for their frequent disobedience of His will? If Assyria or any other power triumphed over Yahweh's people, what was that power but the rod of Yahweh's righteous anger? <sup>2</sup> When Yahweh had performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, would He not cast away His rod as an instrument for which he had no further use? <sup>3</sup> Nay, even when His people were in captivity in Babylon, was He not still with them, waiting to take them from among the heathen and bring them back into their own land? <sup>4</sup> Thus, by the time of Deutero-Isaiah, faith in Yahweh was not held to be discredited by the sufferings of His people; on the contrary, He was explicitly recognised as the one, true, and living God Who ruled over all nations and all countries. Proved to have been operative in one sphere of human life after another, He was proved to have no equal in the heavens above or the earth beneath. He was known as One "that sitteth upon the circle of the earth; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; that bringeth princes to nought; and that maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> God's "felt presence" in the believing, praying soul is dismissed by the illusionist as mere self-deception. His objection has been disposed of by the argument advanced in ch. iv.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. x. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* x. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. xl. 22-23.

This aspect of the history of the Hebrews' thought of God, taken as a whole, is clear evidence that that thought was developed step by step as the result of practical experience. By being acted on, what was originally belief in a merely tribal deity became a belief so modified and so confirmed by the course of events and the effect of these events on individual believers' souls that their resultant notion of God as an infinite, eternal, all-powerful, and all-wise Being Who rules over all, was no mere working hypothesis set up to explain the facts of life, but a conviction so strongly verified as to amount to genuine, if still incomplete knowledge. No doubt, for certain individuals in certain circumstances, the facts of life strained this conviction almost to the breaking-point; yet even harassed Job did not deny God's existence, the nation never altogether lost its faith, and when the conception of God as a Supreme Mind is put to the test of modern philosophical criticism, it maintains its validity. Since it is mind as we know it in ourselves which is the source of unity, order, or purpose, there is reason for holding—so far as there is observed unity, order, or purpose in the world—that it is an infinite and eternal Mind Who rules over all.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. GOD KNOWN THROUGH CONSCIENCE

(A) In their prehistoric period the Hebrews, like other prehistoric tribes, must have discovered by the

<sup>1</sup> For the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments as confirming faith in God, see W. R. Matthews' recent volume, *The Purpose of God*. Compare Sorley's *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, pp. 316 et seq. Compare also, Stout's *Mind and Matter*, p. 137, where he says, "I have dealt in this chapter with the questions at issue between the supporters and opponents of the design-argument for the existence of God. I have answered these questions in a sense favourable to its supporters."

ordinary processes of trial, failure, and success that certain lines of conduct conduced to well-being, and that certain others did not. No doubt their implicit conception of what constituted well-being was extremely vague ; but, such as it was, it functioned as their standard of moral judgment. Conduct which was in accordance with it was recognised as " right," and conduct which was not in accordance with it was recognised as " wrong," the right being enforced as far as possible by rigid adherence to tribal custom, and the wrong being frowned upon as taboo.

Now, so far as this rudimentary morality imposed felt obligations on the Hebrews, it was taken to have its source in the will of Yahweh ; for, if it was on Yahweh that their very existence depended, was He not also the jealous upholder of such customs as conduced to their continued being and well-being ? and was He not, likewise, the implacable enemy of all such conduct as was taboo ? Success in any undertaking was interpreted as a sign of His approval, and failure as a sign of His anger. Thus, when the Hebrews had entered their historic period, the fact that Joshua was able to conquer Jericho was regarded by them as proof that " Yahweh was with Joshua " ;<sup>1</sup> and when they were defeated by their enemies before the gates of Ai, they attributed their defeat to the withdrawal of Yahweh's favour on account of the sin of Achan.<sup>2</sup>

Noting, then, that when the Hebrews entered their Historic period, they already believed in Yahweh as a Personal Being possessing certain moral attributes, we have to enquire whether or not—as the theory of religious knowledge maintained here would lead us to expect—the Hebrews proceeded to alter their ideas concerning Yahweh as new circumstances and the new modes of behaviour

<sup>1</sup> Josh. vi. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Josh. vii. 11-12.



which these circumstances called for, gradually enlightened their consciences.

There is abundant evidence that this was precisely what took place. For example, the settlement in Canaan led to the development of a whole host of new customs and taboos, and the corresponding moral precepts and legal enactments—in the main preserved for us in the “Book of Covenant”<sup>1</sup>—were held to be expressions of Yahweh’s will; but when the “Book of the Covenant” was itself modified and expanded to suit the requirements of a still later period, the Deuteronomic Code thus formed was likewise regarded as also an expression of Yahweh’s will.<sup>2</sup> In other words, by essentially inferential processes the conception of Yahweh developed *pari passu* with the development of tribal morality. Similarly, fresh insight into duty on the part of an individual was taken by him, according to his already-existing faith in Yahweh, as giving him fresh insight into Yahweh’s nature. Thus, when David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband murdered in the trenches before Rabbath-Ammon, he was exercising an early king’s generally-recognised privilege of doing as he pleased with his subjects; but when Nathan, by telling his parable of the ewe-lamb, succeeded in showing David’s conduct towards Uriah and Bathsheba in an entirely new light to David himself, namely, as an exercise of power which was lawless, as something which was essentially wrong, David at once took Nathan’s moral revelation as a revelation of the Divine Will, and exclaimed with penitence, “I have sinned against Yahweh.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xx. 22–23, 33.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. v. 28. See S. R. Driver’s *Introduction to Literature of the Old Testament*, pp. 73 et seq.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Sam. xii. 13; cf. H. W. Robinson’s *Religious Ideas of Old Testament*, p. 163.

(B) The most important illustrations of the way in which Yahweh was gradually apprehended as the source of all goodness through inferences drawn from advancing moral experiences, are to be found in the teaching of the great Hebrew prophets.

In the first place, it gradually became clear to Amos, as his daily work brought him into contact with the representatives of other nations, that what was right for one man or nation was right for another in corresponding circumstances; that if there was any such thing as morality at all, it must have universal validity. Now for Amos, as for his religiously-minded forebears, the moral law, so far as he knew it, was the voice of Yahweh; he concluded, therefore, that Yahweh's will was binding not only on Israel, but also on Israel's neighbours. It is true that Amos did not explicitly teach an ethical monotheism; nevertheless an ethical monotheism was at least the implicit basis of his varied prophecies concerning Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, and the rest. Social injustice in all its forms and wherever found, he declared, was abhorrent in Yahweh's sight, and so long as it continued, elaborate acts of worship in His sanctuaries were a mere mockery.<sup>1</sup> What were contemporary disasters in the form of famine, drought, pestilence, and defeat in battle but proof of His intolerance of evil, and warnings of a final judgment which would yet roll down like a mighty flood alike on Israel and on other nations? <sup>2</sup> In short, Yahweh stood in moral relations to all men, and only the righteous few could hope to be saved from his righteous indignation against evil-doers.<sup>3</sup> He was the one, only, and altogether perfect God.

Such partial insight into the will of God as Amos gained by reflecting on the nature of righteousness and

<sup>1</sup> Amos. v. 21-25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 6-12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ix. 8-9.

the moral lessons of history, was deepened for the race by the tragic experience of Hosea.

Hosea's wife, whom he dearly loved, proved unfaithful to him. He found, however, that though she had been able to break her vows to him, he could not break his vows to her ; in spite of her infidelity, his love for her was not changed or exhausted. And then it flashed upon his mind—with humbling and at the same time inspiring effect—that if he, an imperfect man, could continue to love his unworthy wife, relations similar to the loyal and tender relations which ought to exist between husband and wife must also exist between God and His unworthy people. Their sins were nothing less than the wounding of a freely-bestowed, utterly undeserved, and inexhaustible love. Since this love was a righteous love, those who had wounded it could not, indeed, be permitted to live as if no harm had been done. So long as they were impenitent for their disloyalty to their God, they must be punished for their ways and rewarded for their doings.<sup>1</sup> But since the Divine Love was also the love of One Who could be no less long-suffering and merciful than His prophet, even the impenitent could not be given up altogether ;<sup>2</sup> and as soon as they repented their sins, they would be freely forgiven, and again freely loved.<sup>3</sup>

Isaiah did not add to the great ideas of God as righteous, loving, and merciful which had been thus elucidated by Amos and Hosea ; on the other hand, he made an important addition to the knowledge of God by relating those ideas to the current idea of God's holiness, and he did so like his predecessors by reflecting on the implications of his moral experience.

In Isaiah's day it was an accepted notion, developed out of the mysterious taboos and superstitions of earlier

<sup>1</sup> Hos. iv. 9-12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xi. 8-12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xiv. 4.

generations, that God was holy in the sense of being separate from men, inaccessible, and of perilous power. Now the perilous power of God smote Uzziah with leprosy, when, in the heyday of wordly success, he did a forbidden thing in the temple.<sup>1</sup> It seemed to Isaiah that this power had been exercised not arbitrarily, but because of the immorality of Uzziah's conduct. Hence it was "in the year that King Uzziah died" that the young, impressionable prophet saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, holy in the sense of being not only separate from men, inaccessible, and of perilous power, but also altogether pure.<sup>2</sup> Connecting the ideas of Amos and Hosea with all that the holiness of God already meant as transcendence over the world, so that thenceforth God was conceived by all who learned the prophet's lesson as a Transcendent Moral Being, Isaiah taught a conception of God which may indeed have been subsequently amplified, but has not yet been—and is never likely to be—superseded.

Jeremiah's main contribution to the development of religious thought was to emphasise the spirituality of God and His relations with individuals as such; for Jeremiah, inheriting the teaching of Hosea that men went wrong outwardly because they were first of all at fault inwardly, gained a corresponding insight into the moral purity of the Being with Whom men were called to live in fellowship. If even to Jeremiah the heart was deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,<sup>3</sup> it must be still more wicked and deceitful in the eyes of God. God must be One Who, as a psalmist had already said, desired

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xxvii. 16, et seq. Uzziah's death was attributed to the agency of God in accordance with the general Hebraic view that behind striking events in the material world lay a divine causality. It has been already argued that in principle the view was sound.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. vi. 1-8.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. xvii. 9.

“truth in the inward parts.”<sup>1</sup> And since God’s people did not realise this, but thought that they might secure His favour by observing a form of worship divorced from the earnest practice of righteousness, He was sure to shatter their self-complacency by destroying their temple and breaking up their homes and sending them themselves into exile, thus teaching them that only by amending their ways could they hope to live happily in a world overruled by One Who was not only all-powerful, but also perfect in righteousness.<sup>2</sup>

Jeremiah’s conviction and prophecy received startling confirmation when, in 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem, and carried off most of its inhabitants to work as slaves in Babylon. No doubt some of the exiles may have found a sufficient explanation of their misfortunes in the political policies of their conqueror and his desire to obtain extra labour for building purposes in his rapidly-growing capital; but, to the minds of others among them, so close was the correspondence between Jeremiah’s teaching and what had actually happened, there was little doubt that the prophet had been right, and that God was such an One as to require of them inner purity of thought and feeling as well as outward decency of action. They were therefore prepared to listen to Jeremiah when he went on to teach them that if in exile they put God to the proof by repenting their past sins and praying for His help, He would not refuse to help them, but would be their refuge and strength.<sup>3</sup>

(C) Passing from these briefly-outlined illustrations of the way in which, as the theory of religious knowledge maintained here leads us to expect, the Hebrews’ conception of God was in part gradually developed through what were essentially inferences drawn from advancing

<sup>1</sup> Ps. li. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. xxx. 10-17.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. vii. 1-16.

moral insight, we have now to note the verification of the resultant conception of God in the private experience of such individuals as put it to practical tests. For example, when Jeremiah first perceived that he was morally obliged to go and preach his unwelcome message to his fellow-countrymen, he naturally shrank from his given task. But the voice of duty, he believed, was the voice of God; and when he acted on this belief and assayed his task, he found himself to be fit for it. In other words, he found that, in response to his trust in God, God fulfilled His promise, "Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee to deliver thee."<sup>1</sup> His felt access of courage was an immediate experience of God's self-imparting goodness.

It was similar with the exiles in Babylon. Urged to put God to the proof by repenting their past sins against Him and praying for His help, they actually found that He was the refuge and strength of the penitent: for when they cried for encouragement, they received it, and what did this mean if not that God was spontaneously responding to their expressed needs? <sup>1</sup> Thus in Psalm 22, which seems to have been written during the exile in Babylon,<sup>2</sup> we come on the words, "God hath not abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from him: but when he cried unto Him, He heard." The latter verses of Psalm 69, almost certainly exilic in origin, contain the testimony that "the Lord heareth the needy, and despiseth not His prisoners." And typical sentences from the writings of Deutero-Isaiah are, "God giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no

<sup>1</sup> Jer. i. 8. In ch. iv. we have already dealt with the illusionist's argument according to which it would be untrue to say that God spontaneously responded to the petitions of His exiled people, the truth being that they only encouraged themselves!

<sup>2</sup> See discussion by Kirkpatrick, *The Psalms*, p. 114.

might, He increaseth strength.<sup>1</sup> . . . His hand is not shortened that it cannot save ; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." <sup>2</sup>

Instances need not be multiplied.<sup>3</sup> The fact that such conceptions of God as a Moral Being living in personal relations with His people were gained apart from speculative thinking, of which there is hardly any evidence in the Old Testament, serves to illustrate and verify the theory that our knowledge of God develops in ways analogous to those in which our knowledge of one another develops. Our knowledge of one another is initially inferential in principle, the initial inference of the individual as to the existence of other minds being confirmed for him in the course of experience by their innumerable responses to his practical requirements of them ;<sup>4</sup> but in a similar, if much more complex way, the responses of God to the needs of those who act on an initially unverified belief in His existence,<sup>5</sup> so confirm this belief that it becomes at least in many respects indubitable belief in Him or partial *knowledge* of Him as being good. What the speculative

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xl. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* lix. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The point at issue has been illustrated by quoting from late documents. It is not implied, of course, that it was only in late times that there was verification of belief in God by way of personal experience of His response to trustful prayer. The Exile did indeed bring God's relations to men as individuals into clearer light than had been enjoyed previously. But there was much personal fellowship with Him from as far back as can be traced. Moses asked for courage wherewith to do his given task, and the access of courage which supervened was evidence to him that God was with him. Similarly David, calling upon God for mercy, learned from the response given to his prayer that God did not despise a broken and contrite heart.

<sup>4</sup> See Ch. VII.

<sup>5</sup> The belief is either taught them by others or inferred from the observation of those facts which suggest the likelihood of there being supernatural mind in the world in individual form or forms. See Ch. VIII.

thinker is called upon to do is not to question the validity of the knowledge of God thus gained, but to give a reasoned account of it as valid ; nor does he find that this task is impossible. An examination of the nature of men's ordinary moral judgments shows him that these judgments logically imply the existence of an absolute moral law or moral ideal. An absolute moral law or moral ideal, however, " cannot exist in material things. And it does not exist in the mind of this and that individual. Only if we believe in the existence of a Mind for which the true moral ideal is already in some sense real, a Mind which is the source of whatever is true in our own moral judgments, can we rationally think of the moral ideal as no less real than the world itself. Only so can we believe in an absolute standard of right and wrong, which is as independent of this or that man's actual ideas and actual desires as the facts of material nature. The belief in God, though not (like the belief in a real and active self) a postulate of there being any such thing as morality at all, is the logical presupposition of an ' objective ' or absolute morality. A moral ideal can exist nowhere and nohow but in a mind ; an absolute morality can exist only in a Mind from which all reality is derived. Our moral ideal can only claim objective validity in as far as it can rationally be regarded as a revelation of a moral ideal eternally existing in the mind of God."<sup>1</sup>

### 3. THE PROBLEM OF INNOCENT SUFFERING

In such ways as have been outlined above, the Hebrews gradually learned to think of Yahweh as the one, true, and living God, all-powerful and altogether good. But though this conception was to a large extent verified by many different aspects of nature, history, and personal

<sup>1</sup> Rashdall, *Theory of Good and Evil*, vol. ii. p. 212.



experience, it was never—and, from the nature of the case, never could be—so thoroughly verified as to leave no room at all for doubt as to its validity. Thus there was the difficulty for faith in God as at once all-powerful and morally perfect which lay in the fact that the wicked often flourished like a green bay tree, while the comparatively innocent man often suffered seriously.<sup>1</sup> Though the writer of Psalm 139 was so sure of God's omnipotence and moral perfection that he could describe Him as besetting him behind and before with His goodness, he was nevertheless perplexed by God's apparent tolerance of evil-doers. In particular, the writer of the book of Job was so troubled by the sufferings of the innocent that he found it by no means easy to reconcile recognition of these sufferings with his conviction that God was at once all-powerful and altogether just.

Here, for two reasons, we need refer only to the book of Job. In the first place, the contents of the book amply illustrate the fact that though systematic speculation about God's nature played a very small, if any part in the development of religious knowledge among the Hebrews, their religion included much deep reflection on concrete religious problems. In the second place, the book stresses the important point for our epistemology that, however serious the problems for faith may be, an individual's belief in God may have been so verified for him by all that he has observed in the world beyond him and experienced in his own inward life, as to have become partial *knowledge* of God or such certainty of His combined power and goodness as cannot be wholly undermined even by life's deepest mysteries.

When Job suddenly lost his possessions, his children, and his health, he was not only stricken with sorrow, he

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxvii. 35.

was also amazed ; for, according to the theory of his time, piety and prosperity together with their opposites were indissolubly connected with and strictly proportioned to each other, and though Job neither was nor claimed to be utterly blameless in character, he knew that he had done nothing to deserve the particularly grievous calamities which had befallen him. In suggesting to him that in the circumstances he should curse God and die, his wife expressed what many are apt to think when inexplicable sorrows have to be endured, namely, " that the difficulties which try our faith are a sufficient reason for renouncing it altogether " ;<sup>1</sup> but Job knew God too well to be able to renounce his faith in Him even when it was tested to the uttermost. In his misery he did indeed reject the orthodoxy of his time with scorn, and raised the most daring questions about the moral government of the universe ; nevertheless, as we must note carefully for the purposes of the present discussion, even in raising his most daring questions about the moral government of the universe, Job never wholly forgot that no amount of intellectual perplexity about the ways of God with men could ever prove such definite knowledge of God's goodness as he possessed to be a vain delusion. Again and again in the course of his fierce challenges of God's justice he returned to his conviction that there must be One over all Who was not less just than he was himself. Thus, even in speaking of God as if He not only tolerated, but ordained the injustice rampant on the earth,<sup>2</sup> he held that there ought to be—and, therefore, must be—in the universe Some Being or other Who would stand between him and his apparent Tormentor.<sup>3</sup> When he rejected the

<sup>1</sup> Edward Caird, *Lay Sermons*, p. 298, quoted by J. E. M'Fadyen, *The Problem of Pain*, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Job ix. 21-24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ix. 32-35.

conventional reasonings of his friends, who had not the honesty to test facts for themselves as the palate tastes food,<sup>1</sup> he turned from them to God Almighty as to the only One Who could help him,<sup>2</sup> thereby once more expressing his irrepressible confidence in God's essential justice. Again, spurning the allegation that he suffered because he was a sinner, and longing for his Vindicator rather than his vindication, he affirmed, "I know that there liveth a Champion Who will one day stand over my dust; yea, Another shall rise as my Witness, and I shall behold God as Sponsor."<sup>3</sup> In other words, Job—or, at any rate, the great religious and literary genius who made Job his mouthpiece—had had his belief in God so verified for him by the amount of good which he had seen and experienced, that though the evil which he had also seen and experienced put a severe strain upon his faith, the strain could not break his faith inasmuch as it included genuine, if very incomplete, knowledge of God's combined power and loving-kindness.

It is the same point, somewhat amplified, which comes out in the chapters recording the Almighty's answer to Job's daring questions about the moral government of the universe.<sup>4</sup> First, the Almighty described the wonders of inanimate nature, and its abundant evidence of the intelligent order in creation; next, He described the wonders of the animal world, and its similarly abundant evidence of the wisdom and care with which animals are provided for; and then, asking Job how he dare impugn the reputation of the Creator and Sustainer of all things in order to justify his own reputation, with magnificent irony He invited Job to sit upon the throne of the

<sup>1</sup> Job xii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xiii. 2-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xix. 25-26, as translated by J. E. M'Fadyen.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* xxxviii.-xli.

universe and govern it better than it actually was governed !<sup>1</sup> That is to say, according to the writer of the book of Job, when we face the problem of innocent human suffering, we must remember both our ignorance of the universe and our knowledge of it. Serious as the problem of innocent human suffering is, it is only a small part of the infinite mystery which surrounds us ; and at least we have more grounds for saying than we have for denying that that mystery is an *orderly* mystery, so that even when we cannot see, we can still believe that innocent human suffering has an intelligent purpose behind it. Nay, we have more grounds for saying than we have for denying that the mystery which surrounds us includes *goodness* as well as order ; for if God cares even for wild animals,<sup>2</sup> does He not also care for men ? and if He does not forget the very wilderness, but “ sends rain on the land where no man is, to gladden the waste and to clothe the parched land with green,”<sup>3</sup> can He not be trusted to remember the places where men are ? We see so much of His goodness in the world and experience so much of it in our lives, that though because of our ignorance we cannot find a completely-satisfying intellectual solution to the problem of evil, we are not justified in renouncing our faith altogether.

<sup>1</sup> On this ironical invitation, M'Fadyen makes the illuminating comment : “ Man in general, Job in particular, if elevated to the throne, would immediately play the petty tyrant, treating the rebellious with all the inconsidered and short-sighted indignation which he had vainly expected God to display, and annihilating them on the spot. But God, Who not only spares the wild animals but loves them and feeds them, does not habitually drive the wicked into the outer darkness but shows upon them something of that large patience which is natural to One to Whom a thousand years are but as a day. The very quality in God which provokes and perplexes Job is only another of His glorious attributes, and in no way incompatible with His hatred of wrong.” See *The Problem of Pain*, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> Job xxxviii. 41.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vers. 26-27.

It would be interesting, while giving full recognition to the strenuous way in which the writer of the book of Job tried to face his given problem without going beyond the facts already made evident to him, to trace the indications in his work of at least a longing for a fuller, more satisfying demonstration of God's goodness than had yet been given to mankind—such a demonstration as was given later in Jesus Christ. But, so far as this longing became a definite hope in Hebrew religion, it may be dealt with separately in the section which follows.

#### 4. THE HOPE OF REDEMPTION

As already indicated, there was never a time when the Hebrew did not think of Yahweh as not possessing moral attributes. From the beginning they regarded Him as the Upholder of all that conduced to their well-being, and the Enemy of all that did not. Each advance in their apprehension of goodness was accompanied by a corresponding advance in their ideas of the Divine Will. But, conversely, the fact that they habitually conceived goodness as having its ground in the will of Yahweh helped to determine their ideas of morality. "Right" conduct was not thought of as being simply conduct conducive to human happiness, but as being conduct well pleasing to God. And, similarly, "wrong" conduct was not thought of as conduct which merely failed to conduce to human happiness; it was regarded as "sinful."

A clear illustration of this general reaction of the Hebrews' varied conceptions of God upon their notions of morality is to be found in the close correspondence between the ideas of God emphasised by their prophets and what these prophets taught about sin. For example, according to Amos, who held that Yahweh was above all else the supreme righteous Ruler of the world, sin was

“unrighteousness” or “injustice”; according to Hosea, whose main idea of Yahweh was that He was a God of unmerited unchanging love, sin was the alienation of the heart of His people from Him; according to Isaiah, who emphasised the thought that Yahweh was the transcendently High and Holy One, sin was “pride” or insensibility to the Divine Majesty. Passing over details, however, we may be content here to note that what gave its central meaning to the prophets’ teaching on the nature of sin was their vivid awareness of Yahweh as a Supreme Person living in close contact with His people. Every immoral act was an act of offence against Him Himself. And, as the Exile helped to make clear, this was true not only of the acts of the Hebrews as a nation, but also of the acts of the Hebrews as individuals.<sup>1</sup>

Now, Yahweh’s deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt had convinced them that He had entered into a covenant with them whereby He promised that He would be their God, and they would be His people.<sup>2</sup> Once they had accepted this promise, it was their duty to live in accordance with it, doing what their God commanded them to do. But even when they had not done what their God commanded them to do, He could not but remain true to His original purpose to do them good for no merits of theirs, but of His own free will. As the Hater of iniquity, He was indeed constrained to punish them for their sins against Him; yet He would never utterly destroy them, but would finally deliver them from evil in every form, even for their sins. He was not, as A. B. Davidson points out,<sup>3</sup> the God with Whom we are familiar

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ezek. chs. xviii. and xxxiii.

<sup>2</sup> No doubt this notion was held more or less clearly even before the Exodus. After the Exodus it became quite explicit.

<sup>3</sup> *The Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 144, referring to Isa. xlv. 21.

in bad dogmatics, namely, a righteous or just God and *yet* a Saviour ; He was a righteous, covenant-keeping God, and *therefore* a Saviour.

It was to this thought of Yahweh as a Saviour that the best minds among the Hebrews returned again and again, when they were faced with evil in its worst form as sin. Accepting it as having an irrefutable basis in practical experience, they did not ask whether God would one day fully accomplish His gracious will towards His people ; they only asked how He would do it. In particular, they asked how He would redeem the sinful individual, or what steps He would take in view of the moral necessities of the case to reconcile the sinner to Himself.

We cannot enter here into a detailed discussion of the varied answers given to the given problem. Suffice it to say that in the main they took the form of a hope, deduced from accumulated knowledge of past evidences of God's goodness, that He would send to earth a Messiah, His Perfect Representative, Who would carry His gracious will towards His people into effect. This Messiah might be a Kingly Figure, Who would establish God's reign of righteousness and peace among men ; or He might be a Unique Sufferer, Who, by bearing the consequences of men's sins innocently and willingly on their behalf would move them by the spectacle of His innocent sufferings to repent the evils which caused these sufferings, and thereby purify their hearts of all enmity against God, so that at last God could live in peaceful fellowship with them, and they in peaceful fellowship with God.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Isa. liii. The conception of the Suffering Servant of the Lord was suggested by the sufferings borne by the godly few in Israel during the Exile. Clearly, their sufferings were not the result of their own sins. But might they not, by suffering willingly on account of

The hope thus inferred from the Hebraic conception of God as being righteous, and therefore a Saviour, was not fulfilled until the coming of Jesus Christ. But, if we may anticipate what has yet to be described, we may say that Christ's fulfilment of the hope was a vitally important instance of the verification of the Hebrew prophets' main conception of God ; a proof that, through acting on an initially-vague and gradually modified and ennobled belief in the existence of a Supreme and Perfect Mind, they had attained genuine, if still very incomplete knowledge of His being, nature, and will.

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the sins of others, help to put these others to shame for their sin and thus win them over to practise righteousness ?

This was an even deeper line of reflection on the problem of innocent suffering than the one expounded in the book of Job.



## CHAPTER XI

### CHRISTIANITY

SO far, an attempt has been made to show that the main features of Primitive, Gentile, and Hebrew Religion illustrate and thereby confirm our theory of religious knowledge, namely : that the individual begins with a partial apprehension of the whole universe in both its physical and mental aspects ; that, on the grounds of certain observed facts and processes, he implicitly infers that there are other minds in the universe akin in nature to his own ; and that, so far as he is thus led to believe in the existence not only of human, but also of superhuman minds, he has—or may have—his initial belief so modified and, in its modified form, so verified by what he continues to observe, by his own moral and religious experience, and by all that he can learn from the observation and the moral and religious experience of others, that he gradually comes—or may come—partially to know God as a Being of infinite power, unsearchable wisdom, and perfect goodness.<sup>1</sup>

We have now to ask, with all possible reverence, whether or not this theory also covers the main facts of

<sup>1</sup> The parentheses introduced into this summary statement are intended to cover the facts : first, that as the individual is strictly limited by—though not limited to—the contents of his immediate experience, he may easily fall into error in his interpretation of such facts as are presented to his mind ; second, that as he may choose not to put a “believing” interpretation on the facts or not to act as if the belief suggested by them were sound, he may thus cut himself off from the possibility of having the belief practically verified.

the Christian Religion. In particular, we have to ask whether or not it covers the answers to such questions as, "How did Jesus arrive at His knowledge of God? How did He communicate this knowledge, so far as it could be communicated, to His immediate disciples? And in what way is it shared by His disciples of the present day?"

### I. JESUS' KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Jesus conceived God as an omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly righteous, and infinitely gracious Being; in particular, He thought of Him as His heavenly Father, the latter thought being the correlative of His conception of Himself as God's only-begotten Son. Now, whatever else Jesus was, He was at the very least the greatest spiritual genius of the race. In His case above all, therefore, it is not our business to cast doubt on the validity of the given conception of God, but rather, in trying to show how He arrived at it, to account for it as valid.

A. In view of the almost complete silence of the New Testament on the early development of Jesus, the problem of showing how He arrived at His conception of God is beset with grave difficulties. In the main we are forced to depend for relevant information on inferences drawn from such accounts as we possess of His mature years. Of this at least, however, we are certain—and it is of vital importance for the solution of our present problem—that Jesus actually did develop mentally and spiritually, and to the end of His life on earth remained truly human, with all that this implies of being under the necessity of learning by experience.<sup>1</sup> He claimed, it is true, to know God as no other human being knew Him;<sup>2</sup> but this claim

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xi. 27.

did not amount to a claim to know all as God knows all, for Jesus frankly confessed that His knowledge of God's purposes was limited in so important a matter as the time of His return after death.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, when He prayed at Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me," He showed that at first He was not quite sure whether or not it was God's will for Him to die on the Cross.<sup>2</sup> And though His awful cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" did not mean that He had given way to despair, seeing that in spite of His acute distress He still had sufficient faith to offer prayer, it did mean that for a time at least He was grievously *tempted* to give way to despair, and that so far His knowledge of God's perfect love for Him was temporarily obscured.<sup>3</sup>

These utterances of Jesus Himself are in keeping with such other evidence as we possess that, being truly human, He was not omniscient, but gained information through the ordinary process of hearing and seeing,<sup>4</sup> asked questions because He desired an answer to them,<sup>5</sup> experienced surprise and disappointment,<sup>6</sup> and sometimes even made mistakes.<sup>7</sup> Nor is there any proof that though Jesus' knowledge was limited in these ways, He nevertheless also possessed supernatural knowledge. His knowledge that His disciples would find an ass ready for His entry into Jerusalem, for example, needs no supernatural explanation;<sup>8</sup> His alleged statement to the woman of Samaria at the well of Sychar about the number

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiv. 36 (R.V.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xxvi. 39.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xxvii. 46.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 12, xiv. 13; Mark i. 37, ii. 17; John iv. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* xvi. 13-15; Luke viii. 30; John xi. 34.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* viii. 10, xxvi. 40; Mark vi. 6, vii. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Mark xi. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. xxi. 2.

of her husbands was probably not accurately reported by her ;<sup>1</sup> and His prophetic anticipations of such events as His death, His resurrection, and the doom of Jerusalem were doubtless due simply to His exceptional moral and spiritual insight. Indeed, we may go further and say that since Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are,"<sup>2</sup> and since temptation of this sort is due in part to the limitations of human knowledge, Jesus must have been subject to such limitations from the beginning of His earthly life to the end of it.

Granting, then, that Jesus, in so far as He lived a truly human life, developed mentally and spiritually, may we not take it as highly probable that even His knowledge of God was gained in ways similar to those in which ordinary men gain theirs? Without denying His unique moral and spiritual insight, without attributing to Him any moral or spiritual defect or failure, and without questioning His efficiency and authority as the Supreme Revealer of God's nature and will, may we not hold that He began by rapidly learning all that was best in the religious traditions of His nation, acted wholeheartedly on the belief in God thus given Him, and enjoyed such definite and repeated responses to His trust in the form of ever-increasing spiritual vision, moral power, and inward peace that, step by step, and without culpable error at any single stage in His progress, He gradually grew in His apprehension of Him Who reveals Himself to the pure in heart? At any rate, from first to last Jesus lived by faith, asking God again and again for guidance and strength, acknowledging His utter dependence on God, and making it His constant aim to do God's will.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the exaggeration reported in John iv. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. iv. 15.

<sup>3</sup> See especially John v. 19, 20, viii. 28, xv. 15, xvii. 8.

In particular, though He had within Him the power to perform miraculous works, as often as He gave any explanation of this power He said that it was given Him from above, the general principle being that an essential condition of doing miraculous works or having them done was to appeal trustfully to God for help.<sup>1</sup> And if Jesus thus lived by faith and had His faith regularly confirmed by the actual course of events, including God's intimate personal fellowship with Him in His hours of prayer, we have here a sufficient—though it may not be the only possible—explanation of the way in which He arrived at His knowledge of God as omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly righteous, and infinitely gracious.<sup>2</sup>

*B.* This account of Jesus' knowledge of God, even if it be sound, still leaves us without an explanation of the fact that Jesus knew God in particular as His heavenly Father. The question arises, therefore, whether or not

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. xvii. 20. Cf. xii. 28, where Jesus speaks of casting out devils "by the spirit of God." Cf. also Luke xi. 20, John xiv. 10 ("The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works").

<sup>2</sup> It may not be the only possible explanation, because we have to admit that ultimately the mind of Jesus, the Perfect Man, is beyond our comprehension.

The objection may also be made that, from the nature of the case, no one living under human conditions can ever have belief in such attributes of God as His omnipresence, His omnipotence, and His omniscience so completely verified as to be in possession of actual knowledge of them. This is, of course, true, if by knowledge of God's attributes is meant direct acquaintance with them such as only God Himself can have. But as pointed out in Chapter VI. our knowledge far transcends what we are directly acquainted with, so that through the minute part of the physical world immediately given us in our sense-experience we may know the world as a vast system. In a similar way, we may have genuine knowledge of God as a Perfect Being through our direct acquaintance with His infinite perfection may be, by comparison with complete knowledge of it, infinitesimally small.

our theory of religious knowledge is capable of elucidating this central point.

Now, even to raise this question concerning Jesus' central conception of God, the correlative of His conception of Himself, may seem to some minds to be guilty of presumption and irreverence ; for if One so great as Jesus took Himself to be the Son of God, ought not our attitude to His inner life to be one of silent adoration only, not curious enquiry ? Again, unless the Christian Church has been wholly mistaken in maintaining that Jesus actually was the Holy One He took Himself to be, how can we who are sinful ever hope to understand the mystery of His unique self-consciousness ? In any case, is it not the fact that whereas the New Testament tells us very little about the development of His apprehension of God, it tells us still less about the development of His thoughts about Himself ?

We must admit that there is some force in these objections to our enquiry. On the other hand, we are not without justification in proceeding with it. For Jesus Himself encouraged fearless enquiry. As the Christian Church delights to proclaim, in spite of our sinfulness we can know Him at least in part. And further, while an effort to penetrate as far as possible behind the accounts of His mature self-consciousness to His inner development may perchance become irreverent, it does not do so of necessity.

Making a strenuous attempt, then, to prosecute our enquiry with reverence, we have to note first of all that in His maturity Jesus thought of Himself as being not merely *primus inter pares*, but " holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," <sup>1</sup> men's rightful Lord, the promised Messiah, God's only-begotten Son. He did not,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vii. 26.

indeed, speak a great deal about this conception of Himself or make it the explicit subject of debate or argument ; but time and again He quietly claimed for Himself a divine dignity, and consistently presupposed it in such activities as summoning men to submit to His spiritual authority, pardoning their sins, and working miraculous works on their behalf. In short, the conception of Himself as the Son of God was a conception by which He lived, and for which ultimately He died. " No scepticism can shake our conviction that never man spake as this Man did about Himself. He stood alone, not only in the faith of His followers, but in His own apprehension of what He was to God and man." <sup>1</sup>

The point is of such vital importance that it requires thoroughgoing demonstration. But we do not need to attempt this task here ; for it has been already accomplished elsewhere, notably in Denney's volume on *Jesus and the Gospel*.<sup>2</sup> Taking it as an established fact that Jesus thought of Himself as the Son of God and of God as His heavenly Father, we pass on to the special problem of accounting for Jesus' conception of Himself as valid.

As for the abstractly possible suggestion that Jesus' conception of Himself was held insincerely, and promulgated by Him only in order that He might win for Himself a place in men's regard to which He secretly knew that He had no right, it may be dismissed at once. Whatever Jesus was, He was not the world's arch-hypocrite. Nor is it easy to take very seriously the other abstractly possible suggestion that while Jesus held His conception of Himself with perfect sincerity, He was completely mistaken as to His real nature. After all, if, as

<sup>1</sup> Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, p. 335.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Alexander Martin, *The Finality of Jesus for Faith*, ch. iii ; also A. E. Garvie, *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus*.

has been argued at length in a previous chapter,<sup>1</sup> the human mind is capable of passing valid religious judgments, it would be strange beyond utterance that the admittedly Greatest Religious Mind of all the ages should have been mistaken as to Its own identity. No one who has learned to venerate Jesus for His unsurpassed wisdom and sanity can even tolerate the idea that He was a deluded fanatic. Nay, were this idea tolerated, we should have to revolutionise all our other commonly accepted ideas about the intelligent ordering of the universe: for, as Mackintosh says with regard to Jesus' conception of Himself as the Son of God and therefore Messiah, "here is the most influential Figure in history . . . and we can see that for His own mind the messianic thought, with its boundless implications, is vital and decisive. Now confront this with the supposed fact that the belief is only a rather discreditable piece of fanaticism. What light is flung thereby on the Divine Government of the world? What sort of universe is it in which such things can be? in which the best and bravest and highest flows thus from a mere hallucination?"<sup>2</sup>

In view of these considerations alone, not to mention such proofs of the validity of Jesus' self-consciousness as must be discussed later when we come to deal with the ways in which He authenticated His unique claim in what He did for His immediate followers, and the ways in which He continues to authenticate it in what He still does for all others who put their trust in Him, we may take Jesus' conception of Himself to have been founded on fact. At this stage of our enquiry it only remains for us to ask how Jesus arrived at His knowledge of Himself, and whether or not He did so in accordance with the theory of religious knowledge here maintained.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. IV.      <sup>2</sup> *The Person of Jesus Christ*, 5th ed., S.C.M. Press, p. 20.



Recalling the fact that though Jesus was the Son of God, He lived a human life, we are perhaps not altogether wrong in hazarding some such account of His inner development as this :

Beginning with the natural tendency to look for evidence of the presence of mind in the universe, and being prompted by all that He learned from the observation of nature and the Old Testament to think of the existence of a Perfect Mind, He unfailingly acted on what was thus suggested to Him, and had His trust in God and His obedience to His will so rewarded in the form of perfect spiritual fellowship with God, as distinguished from the imperfect fellowship enjoyed by ordinary men, that He gradually came to see in Himself One Who was not only akin in nature to God, but *of the same nature with God*. For example, to illustrate the point by reference to only one instance of it, as Jesus grew to manhood He found Himself able so to fulfil God's will that in spite of His matchless moral and spiritual insight He was never under the necessity of confessing a single sinful act. No doubt, as Principal Martin argues,<sup>1</sup> Jesus' sinlessness is known to us now—as also to His first followers—by way of deduction from His experienced ability to save men from their sins. It is apprehended gradually as one element in the total impression which He makes on believing minds. But, whereas we infer His sinlessness from His saving grace, He Himself doubtless first became aware of the perfect harmony of His will with the will of God, and this perception not only enabled Him to realise His separateness from sinners, but also enabled Him to realise that

<sup>1</sup> *Finality of Jesus for Faith*, ch. iv., particularly pp. 132-34. Cf. W. R. Matthews' *God in Christian Thought and Experience*, p. 52, where Matthews says: "No conceivable fullness of tradition would be sufficient to demonstrate absolute sinlessness, and it is logically absurd to hope to do so on the basis of the very imperfect records which we possess."

God and He were uniquely related to each other as Father to Son, and that therefore He was fitted and called to fulfil the Messianic rôle anticipated by the prophets of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> Precisely when the latter realisation became clear to His mind, we cannot say. Probably it was at the time of His baptism, when He was convinced that God was saying to Him, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."<sup>2</sup> Then, going and acting on this assurance, and finding it confirmed by the answers given to His prayers for supernatural aid in healing the sick in body and the diseased in mind, by His proved power to redeem the sinful, and by such renewed assurances of God's approval as were given Him in His transfiguration-experience and presumably on the Cross before He said triumphantly, "It is finished," and calmly, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," He lived and died in possession of no mere unverified belief in God taught Him by others or inferred from His own observation of men and things, but in possession of genuine knowledge of God as One uniquely related to Himself. And if this is a true account of the matter, we are thus enabled—without denying the unique character of Jesus and His unique knowledge of God—to bring even His religious apprehension into intelligible relation with our own, His religious apprehension being the completion and crown of all else otherwise known concerning the nature and will of God.

## 2. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD POSSESSED BY JESUS' DISCIPLES

The folk who met Jesus in Palestine came to know Him as we come to know one another; that is to say,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Harnack, *Sayings of Jesus*, p. 245, quoted by Martin, *ibid.* p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iii. 17.

through an initial implicit inference as to His embodied selfhood so thoroughly verified by ordinary intersubjective intercourse that their resultant knowledge of Him as an Individual was indubitable.<sup>1</sup> But what were the main features of the character thus apprehended, and in what way did knowledge of Jesus lead to correlative knowledge of God ?

When Jesus began His public ministry, His hearers perceived in Him an ethico-religious Teacher of unparalleled power and compelling authority. Not, indeed, that Jesus' moral precepts were in themselves novel. As Martin points out, the whole essential elements of what He taught appear to have been taught already by others.<sup>2</sup> Out of a hundred and eleven verses in the Sermon on the Mount only eighteen are calculated to have been without precedent in earlier religious literature.<sup>3</sup> But not only did Jesus set forth a high ideal of character and conduct by word of mouth ; He also practised what He preached, so that when He confronted men, they were confronted with such embodied goodness as had never been known before. Similarly, when He told them that God cared for men as a good father cares for his children, they found His religious teaching at least credible because He Himself exemplified an amazing love for men, and God could not be less perfect than One Whom He had apparently sent to earth on a gracious mission of human sympathy, comfort, guidance, and help.

This first general impression would have been deepened for all who received it, if they had had sufficient moral and spiritual earnestness to take it seriously and act on it. A great many, however, were more anxious to enjoy the material benefits bestowed by Jesus than to

<sup>1</sup> See Ch. VII.

<sup>2</sup> *The Finality of Jesus for Faith*, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 63.

gain His moral and spiritual blessings, so that He could not do for them nearly so much as He longed to do ; for various reasons which need not be dwelt on here, He made a large body of determined opponents ; hence it was only the comparatively few who came to know Him intimately as being much more than an exceptionally great ethico-religious Teacher.

As for these few, in Jesus' company they became aware by degrees that He was reading their inmost natures, analysing their motives and desires, and passing adverse judgments on their characters. It is true, as Rashdall says,<sup>1</sup> that " He did not ask them to obey His precepts except in so far as their consciences bore independent witness to their truth," for He never ignored or despised men's God-given freedom. But His very presence among them awakened and instructed their consciences as they had never been awakened or instructed before ; they intuitively perceived in Him the embodiment of perfect goodness ; and when they frankly compared themselves with Him, they acknowledged with bowed heads that they were moral failures, His very presence among them thus intensifying for them the sorest of all human troubles—the consciousness of sin.

Now, in acknowledging that Jesus embodied the moral ideal, in allowing the justice of His quiet but unflinching claim that He and His words were the final standard of ethical judgment, His disciples were so far implicitly accepting Him as a Divine Being ; for it could not be true of any mere man that in obedience to him and his teaching was summed up fulfilment of the will of God. But this implicit awareness of Jesus as a Divine Being was gradually made clearer to the minds of His disciples when they discovered that He not only convinced them

<sup>1</sup> H. Rashdall, *Conscience and Christ*, p. 34.

of their sinfulness, but also saved them from their consequent misery. As Mackintosh puts it, "precisely when their shame grew intolerable, His treatment of them removed their despair. He would not send them away, or say that He could make nothing of them. Instead, He somehow let them know that He and they were friends for life. His attitude was at once so stern and so understanding, so holy and so merciful, that . . . their eyes opened to the truth that what through Jesus' love they were receiving was the forgiveness of God Himself." <sup>1</sup>

At this point, taking it for granted that no mere man can forgive another his sins as distinct from his offences against his neighbours, we come to the oft-debated question whether Jesus gave men the infinitely precious gift of forgiveness as a gift which He could confer Himself, or only declared God's willingness to pardon the penitent sinner with such convincing power that sinners, believing His assurance, felt themselves thereby delivered from guilt and able to make a new start in life.

In facing this question, it must be admitted that the instances commonly quoted from the New Testament as documentary proof that Jesus offered pardon in His own name or by His own right, are not wholly convincing. It is true, for example, that if we deny that Jesus exercised the divine prerogative of pardoning the penitent, we find it very hard to explain the charge of blasphemy brought against Him after He had dealt with the palsied man at Capernaum; <sup>2</sup> nevertheless it is uncertain whether He said to the man, "Your sins *be* forgiven you," or said to him, "Your sins *are* forgiven you." <sup>3</sup> Similarly, when

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness*, p. 88, H. R. Mackintosh.

<sup>2</sup> Mark ii. 1-12.

<sup>3</sup> The latter alternative, based on a variant reading for which there is good authority, supports the interpretation of Wellhausen, who

Jesus said to the woman who anointed His feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee that her sins were forgiven, He may not have claimed thereby to be exercising a power which no mere man could share with Him, but may only have announced the truth which we are all authorised to make known, namely, that God absolves all who truly repent their sins and believe in His mercy. But, after all, there is not so much difference as at first appears between Jesus' pardoning penitent sinners by His own authority and His declaring God's willingness to pardon them with such convincing power that His declaration was accepted as true. For, supposing that all that Jesus did was to declare God's willingness to pardon the penitent, was it not only because Jesus was more than mortal that this declaration, when uttered by Him, was effective in saving the sinful from their sins? Was it not because they found in His uncompromising judgment of them and His, at the same time, merciful treatment of them, such mingled judgment and mercy, such perfectly righteous and inexhaustible love, as could not but be part and parcel of the nature of God Himself? "Jesus did not write the story of the Prodigal Son on a sheet of paper for men who knew nothing of Himself. He told it to men who saw Him, and who, because of His own personal life, were sure of the Father in heaven of Whom He was speaking."<sup>1</sup> In reconciling the sinful to God, in giving them peace of conscience and instantly or gradually setting them free from bondage to evil habits into the life of liberty and noble achievement, Jesus did for them what they could

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holds that Jesus did not impart forgiveness to the palsied man with the authority of a unique Being, but only by way of interpreting to another what He knew about God's will towards the penitent. See Martin, *op. cit.* p. 157.

<sup>1</sup> Herrmann, *Communion with God*, p. 132.

not do for themselves, and what none of their fellow-men could do on their behalf.<sup>1</sup> And when they took His proved power to redeem their lives in conjunction alike with His quiet claim to be the Possessor of Divine Prerogatives and with the age-old expectation of their nation that in the fullness of time God would send His Messiah to earth, they were constrained to make to Jesus the great confession first promulgated by Peter at Cæsarea Philippi, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."<sup>2</sup>

The knowledge of God thus gained through personal contact with Jesus Christ, the all-sufficing knowledge of Him as One Who had sent His Son to this earth to redeem men from their sins, and Who could therefore be trusted to do for them all else necessary for their well-being, was temporarily, but terribly obscured by Christ's crucifixion. To His own mind it had become steadily clearer that in order to give a full and final demonstration of the Divine Love which bears men's sins and yet remains unexhausted by them, He would have to die and rise again. Even though He had explained this to His disciples, however, they had failed to understand Him; and though it was gloriously true that He had conquered sin on the cross in the sense that in spite of all He suffered there He neither lost His trust in God's perfect goodness nor yielded to the temptation to renounce His love for those who did Him to death, nevertheless His moral and spiritual victory over evil seemed to have ended in defeat when the forces of evil blotted Him out of existence. It was not until He had reappeared to His disciples on several different occasions,

<sup>1</sup> We can, of course, declare to our fellow-men God's willingness to pardon the penitent. So far, we may have part in reconciling them to God. But when we declare God's williness to pardon the penitent, we never dream that our message either will or should be accepted as true, apart from the guarantee of its truth which is to be found in Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xvi. 16.

possessed now, as He told them, of all power in heaven and on earth, that at last they knew for certain that He was the One He had claimed to be ; that God was indeed His heavenly Father ; and that the Divine Love for the sinful was not only perfectly righteous and infinitely merciful, but also invincible.<sup>1</sup>

It remains to ask how far the knowledge of God possessed by Jesus' disciples, as thus briefly sketched, illustrates and confirms our theory of the character of religious knowledge.

The knowledge of God possessed by Jesus' disciples is an extremely important illustration and confirmation of the theory ; for the theory is that within an initially vague apprehension of mind in general in the external world we come to distinguish the being, nature, and will of God in ways analogous to those in which we come to know one another, and if—as an attempt has been made to show—the disciples of Jesus Christ came to know Him as the Son of God and God as His heavenly Father through personal contact with Him, we have in this fact striking proof that our theory can explain the most momentous element in the knowledge of God which the world contains. It is true that the nature of the resurrection-appearances of the risen Christ has been left unaccounted for. Apparently, however, He came after death in embodied form so as to be recognisable by His disciples ; and if it was as an embodied Individual that He reappeared, though we cannot explain—albeit, in virtue of all else that we know about His unique character, we can believe in—His miraculous reappearances, it seems that the knowledge of others which comes through ordinary inter-subjective intercourse was

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent and convincing presentation of the evidence for Christ's resurrection, see F. Morison's volume, *Who Moved the Stone?*



yet again the sort of knowledge which enabled Jesus' disciples to grasp the crucial fact that their once crucified Lord and Saviour was now risen and living.

### 3. MODERN CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The ways in which modern Christians attain their knowledge of God are so varied and complex that here we must simplify discussion of them as much as possible and strive to elucidate only the essential factors in the process whereby a man becomes a Christian and thus apprehends God as made manifest in and through Jesus Christ. These factors, if accurately described, will be recognised by those who, living in happy fellowship with God through Christ's mediation, have also the qualifications necessary for following an epistemological discussion ; though, with regard to those who do not live in fellowship with God through Christ's mediation, it is to be feared that, lacking the distinctively Christian experience, they lack the prerequisite of understanding even the primary contents of the Christian's knowledge of God, not to speak of an attempt at reflective analysis of the factors in the process whereby he gains it. As Mackintosh has said,<sup>1</sup> " You cannot see the beauty or the sense of the glowing cathedral window from without ; to behold the splendour and the miracle you must stoop and enter."

A. Beginning with the ordinary man's commonly-experienced moral and spiritual needs, we note that sooner or later, however eagerly he may have pursued mundane goods and however tenaciously he may still cling to some of them, he feels vaguely dissatisfied with all that they have to offer him. Again, in so far as he has an instructed conscience and pays heed to its judgments, he

<sup>1</sup> H. R. Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, 5th ed. p. 12.

recognises that he is not—and of his own efforts cannot become—the man he ought to be and might have been. Further, he more or less explicitly longs for a view of the world whereby he may be delivered from the fear that his life is in the last resort nothing but vanity, his dear ones destined one day to perish, and the age-long endeavours of the race after well-being a futile waste of energy. In short, though he may not yet recognise the fact, he exemplifies the truth of Augustine's dictum that God has made us for Himself, and we are restless until we find our rest in Him.

Now through its scriptures, through its teaching and preaching, or through the private conversation of its members the Church brings to this man an account of God as the Father of Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son ; and so far as the Church's account of Jesus Christ is adequate, the man is thus presented with a conception of God as One Who is able and willing to take away his feelings of dissatisfaction with the world, give him moral power for moral impotence, and assure him that at the heart of the universe there is an overruling goodness. But the man naturally asks, " Is this conception of God true ? Was Jesus Christ in fact such as the Church represents Him to have been ? "

With regard to the latter part of this question, Herrmann has argued at length that no strength of tradition or weight of ecclesiastical authority is a sufficient foundation for a positive answer to it. " It may be said that from the fact of the existence of His Church and its historical significance we learn with certainty that at least Jesus lived, and that we cannot question the correctness of certain features in the portrait of Jesus preserved in the records of the New Testament. On the strength of these elements in Jesus which beyond all doubt are with us to-day, every reasonable man will hold the more general

features of the common story of His life to be correct. . . . Yet, after all, this helps us little. For no historical judgment, however certain it may appear, ever attains anything more than probability. And what sort of a religion would that be which accepted a basis for its convictions with the consciousness that it was only probably safe ? ” <sup>1</sup>

Herrmann's contention is sound. No historical judgment, however certain it may appear to be, ever attains more than a high degree of probability. But is there, then, no way in which the modern man can verify for himself the Church's account of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and its correlative account of God as His Father ?

The more attentively the modern man considers the Church's account of Jesus Christ, the more he receives the impression that the Church as a society of mere men could not have produced that account out of its own resources ; for the account is one which, as conscience tells him, describes a Perfect Life far above and beyond the highest flights of the unaided human imagination. In particular, this Perfect Life sums up for him the moral law ; and, as the moral law always tends to be conceived as the utterance of a Supreme Person,<sup>2</sup> it seems to him as if through the precepts of Jesus Christ God Himself were addressing him personally.<sup>3</sup> In the circumstances, he may or may not take what seems to be true as if it actually were true. But in so far as he adopts the former alternative and accepts the moral ideal made manifest in Jesus Christ as an expression of the will of God, he inevitably conceives his own past acts of wrong-doing as not only breaches of an impersonal law, but sins against the Most High. He is humbled to the dust with felt guilt and shame.

<sup>1</sup> *Communion with God*, pp. 70-72.

<sup>2</sup> See above argument, pp. 114-23.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. H. R. Mackintosh, *op. cit.* p. 47.

Now, if this were all that the supposed man gained from provisionally accepting as true what the Church tells him about the nature of Jesus Christ, his provisional acceptance of the Church's doctrine would only increase his original dissatisfaction with himself and his environment, and might drive him to despair.<sup>1</sup> But the Church not only tells him of Jesus Christ as One Who summed up in His precepts and practice what he himself recognises to be the moral ideal ; it also tells him of Jesus Christ as One Who loved the sinful and was ready and able to save them from sin's power over them, One Who bore what they inflicted on Him, and yet continued to care for them with a care unconquered by death itself. If only he had certain ground for believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, therefore, he could also believe in God as One Who, being of the same gracious nature as His Son, not only condemned him for his past sins, but also continued to care for him in such fashion that He was willing to forgive him his sins and to deliver him from their power to mar his life. And since the conception of God thus presented to his mind is the conception of One Who alone can meet his felt need, on the basis of his natural tendency to look for and find in the world evidence of the presence of mind akin in nature and responsive to his own, he inevitably feels as if through the Church's account of God as the Father of Jesus Christ a Gracious Spirit were addressing him in his dire distress.

According to this account of the matter, it will be observed, the man does not yet actually know that the Church's representation of God as the Father of Jesus Christ is founded on fact. Nor is it easy for him to accept it as if it were ; for if he does so accept it, he must cast

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the spiritual agonies of Bunyan described in *Grace Abounding for the Chief of Sinners*.

himself on the unmerited mercy of the God in Whom he then believes, and thus surrender all his natural pride and self-dependence. But suppose that, taking the Church's account of God as true and acting on it as such, he surrenders his natural pride and self-dependence, and with a humble and contrite heart asks for the full and free pardon of his sins from Him Who is presented to him as a God of holy, forgiving, redeeming love. The full and free pardon for which he yearns, is then actually given him ; his guilt and shame are actually taken away ; he feels himself to be at one with or reconciled to the Holy One in Whose presence he has hitherto trembled ; his gratitude for the wholly undeserved and infinitely precious gift which he has received, fills him with power to live more and more as he ought to live : and in these and corresponding immediately-experienced mercies he has such confirmation of the Church's account of God as the Father of Jesus Christ that his original trust in that account as one founded on fact is transformed into knowledge of it as actually founded on fact. Through the Church's message God has in a distinctive and spontaneous way responded to his deepest needs, and therefore he at last verifies the Church's message for himself and apprehends God as the living Father of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (a) As against the objection that the whole experience may be illusory, we must refer back to the general considerations argued in Chapter IV. It is true that in the supposed case the man ultimately *wants* to believe in God as the Father of Jesus Christ ; but what he wants to believe, does not determine what he actually *finds*.

(b) As against the contention that if such a transaction as the one described actually takes place, it is an immoral transaction, we may reply with Denney that the love which willingly and innocently bears the sins of men, thus moving them to repentance, is the greatest moral force in the world. See *The Death of Christ*, p. 307. Cf. Rashdall on justice and free forgiveness, in *Theory of Good and Evil*, vol. i. pp. 306-12.

The religious man, having now apprehended God as the Father of Jesus Christ, soon finds a happy solution to the other main practical problems with which, as we have described him, he begins his religious quest. Thus the feeling of dissatisfaction with all that the world has to offer him, now disappears ; for the world now contains for him the *summum bonum*, fellowship with God Himself, and in the enjoyment of this fellowship he has deep-seated and lasting peace amid all the cares and changes of ordinary life. Similarly, his desire for a satisfactory view of the world is fulfilled ; for, knowing God as a God of unspeakable love, he knows also that behind life's mysterious experiences of loss and sorrow there is a gracious, overruling purpose. Death itself cannot conceivably break his fellowship with God. Indeed, he has from God through the mouth of His Son the explicit assurance that where He is, there also shall His loved ones be.

*B.* The aim of this brief sketch of the central things in the Christian's experience has been to show that his apprehension of God takes place in accordance with the theory maintained here as to the nature of religious knowledge in general. His apprehension of God, if our account of it has been essentially accurate, is a particular case of hesitatingly inferring the existence of God from such data as the Church presents to him, and then having this inference so progressively verified in practical experience that the truth of it is firmly established. Admittedly, he would have no basis at all for his initial inference, if from the first he had no apprehension of the existence in the world of mind beyond his own. But, beginning, as we have argued, with a partial apprehension of mind in general, he is able—through certain facts presented to his senses,

particularly the written and spoken word of the Church concerning Jesus Christ—to infer that, in response to the longings of his soul, a Mind akin in nature to his own and also far transcending it is revealing Itself to him. He may, of course, refuse to take this inference seriously and act upon it ; and here we come upon the explanation of the fact that many who hear the Church's message, nevertheless fail to profit by it. It is only he who tries to do the will of God who can know whether or not the Christian doctrine concerning Him is true.<sup>1</sup> But so far as a man does act in accordance with the belief that in Jesus Christ God sent His Son into the world out of love for men, his belief is so progressively verified in his moral and spiritual experience that it progressively changes into indubitable knowledge. No doubt "the most important fact in our life cannot be given once for all, but must be continually laid hold of afresh with all our soul."<sup>2</sup> This is only to say, however, that our knowledge of God as the Father of Jesus Christ is morally and religiously conditioned, not that it is by any means shifting or uncertain. In proportion as the moral and religious conditions of apprehending God are fulfilled, or, in our own terminology, in proportion as we act on the belief suggested to us by the correspondence between our instinctive religious longings and the Gospel, we are led to ever-increasing knowledge of God as our all-in-all.

Now at this point the momentous question arises, "If it is through Jesus Christ that we are brought into such fellowship with God that we know God as a God of almighty holy love, what is the precise relation of Jesus

<sup>1</sup> John vii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Herrmann, *op. cit.* p. 77. Cf. H. R. Mackintosh, *The Christian Apprehension of God*, p. 117, where he says: "It is only in Christ's company, face to face with One Who knows Himself to be the Son, that any of us can learn freshly how to think of the Father."

Christ to God as otherwise revealed by or apprehended through nature and history? Is Jesus Christ the eternally existing Son of the eternal Father, Father and Son being of one nature, an ultimate Duality in Unity? Or, when Jesus Christ was born on earth, did the Holy Spirit or the eternal Logos—as Rashdall suggests—then enter temporarily into a divine-human Person, without, however, being eternally individualised in a second centre of consciousness? ”<sup>1</sup>

This sort of question has to be faced by the religious thinker with all the power at his command; and even if he finally pronounces it to be insoluble, he must give adequate reasons for doing so. However, the supreme task looming up at this point of our discussion need not be attempted here; for, whatever answer may be given to the question concerning Christ's relation to God, that answer can be reached only by the ordinary speculative use of reason, and we have already allowed for the fact that an important part is played by speculation in unifying and clarifying such partial apprehensions of God's nature as we gain by other means. To explain the possibility of these partial apprehensions and to allow for their co-ordination through the theoretical use of reason is all that can be fairly demanded of us so long as we confine ourselves to describing the nature, not the ultimate contents of religious knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> H. Rashdall, *Jesus—Human and Divine*. Rashdall is not explicit as to what in his view happened after Jesus' resurrection. The notion attributed to him here, as regards Jesus' post-resurrection life, is only what *appears* to be his view. He is quite explicit about the temporary incarnation of the Logos, as distinguished from a pre-incarnate Individual.



## CHAPTER XII

### GOD'S SELF-REVELATION

**B**EFORE taking leave of our subject, we must meet briefly at least the main objections which are likely to be raised against what we have maintained to be the character of religious knowledge.

(I) To begin with, some will probably say that to hold that religious knowledge is initially only inferential in principle is to found our whole apprehension of God on an extremely insecure basis. If we really know God in any measure at all, must we not do so directly?

The answer to this objection is that in the first place due weight must be given to our contention that through what we are directly acquainted with in immediate experience, we immediately know a reality immeasurably transcending it. From the beginning, according to our theory, we have a partial apprehension of the whole of reality. But when we come to distinguish the various particular aspects of this reality, we need some clue to them in what is immediately given to us. In the case of our fellow-men all that is immediately given to us as a clue to their existence is in the first instance the *sensa* whereby we perceive their outward behaviour; we only infer their existence as living beings. When this inference is acted on, it is so thoroughly verified by subsequent inter-subjective intercourse—that is to say, by our neighbours' spontaneous responses to our demands upon them and our ability to respond to their demands upon us, or, if the point be pressed to its ultimate issue, by variations in our

immediate experience which enable us to perceive and make these responses—that the existence of our neighbours as living beings is never doubted. And if such certainty of the existence of our fellow-men can be attained through an initially inferential process, may we not have similar certainty of the existence of God by similar, if also much more complicated, means? We have reviewed at length the confirmations of initial belief in Him which are afforded by the main features in the religious life of primitive and civilised men. They are the observed processes of nature, the great movements of history, the inner voice of conscience, and particularly the wondrous things which God does for us through Jesus Christ. Indeed, they are so abundant that to object that, because we hold that belief in God is initially inferential in principle, we are founding our apprehension of Him on an insecure basis, is merely to ignore what we have said as to the endlessly varied and complex ways in which initial belief is verified. Besides, if we were to maintain that we know God not by an initial inference and its confirmations and modifications in experience, but directly, how could we explain—as we have been able to do on our own theory—the vast amount of error in conceiving His nature and will which religious history reveals? If it be true that we begin our apprehension of God by interpreting certain fragmentary data given us in our immediate experience as indications of His existence, it is easy to understand the occurrence of religious errors; for the fragmentary data given us in our immediate experience are capable of being interpreted in a great variety of ways, not all consistent with the truth. But if we know God directly, while on this view we may be ignorant of much of His nature, we cannot fall into positive error concerning Him; and this latter proposition is manifestly false.

(II) A second objection will probably be that according to the account of religious knowledge which we have given, man seems to search after and find out God for himself, whereas, as those of deepest religious insight have consistently maintained, man does not apprehend God by his own efforts, but is apprehended of Him.<sup>1</sup>

The force of this objection is admitted, provided that sufficient stress is put on the word "seems"; for it is by no means our intention to deny that the knowledge of God which we possess is not our self-attained acquisition, but His gracious gift. All we have sought to do is to assess the subjective conditions on which it becomes possible to know God. The knowing mind, however, is itself God's creation; the instinctive longings of the heart for fellowship with Him are stirred by His Spirit; the responses which He accords to our faith are wholly unmerited—and all this we acknowledge, nay, strenuously insist upon. It is only the point of view from which we have approached our subject, therefore, which has forced us to say more about man's apprehension of God than about God's self-revelation, there being no disagreement between us and the Barthians as to the fact that ultimately the initiative is always with God. Where we do disagree with them is in maintaining: first, that God's self-revelation is not confined to the written Word of God, but is mediated also through nature, history, and personal experience; second, that God is not the wholly Other, but One Who, while He is immeasurably above and beyond us, is also akin in nature to us. Indeed, on these points the Barthians are self-contradictory; for how can they consistently tell us that God does not reveal Himself through nature, history, and personal experience, but reveals Himself through His Word, which is in itself a record of His self-revelation

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 9; Phil. iii. 12; etc.

through nature, history, and personal experience? Again, how can they tell us that God reveals Himself at all, if it be true that He is the Wholly Other? Unless, as we have maintained, there be kinship as well as differences between God and man, there can be no self-revelation of God to man; in particular, there can be no incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

(III) The only thing we wish to add, as against a further probable objection that we have over-emphasised the place of knowledge in religion, is that at least we have striven to stress the fact that in apprehending God as akin in nature to himself man has been influenced by all three aspects of his consciousness, the affective, the conative, and the cognitive. Further, though of necessity we have dwelt mainly on the element of knowledge in an avowed discussion of the nature of religious knowledge, we do not deny that a man's faith in God includes far more than knowledge of Him. It includes aspirations, longings, joys, feelings of dependence and unworthiness, adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and much besides which we have not been called upon to describe, and which in any case, being in large measure the ineffable secret of each believing soul, can never be adequately described at all. Even of our knowledge of God the truest thing that can be said is, "*Verius cogitatur Deus quam dicitur, et verius est quam cogitatur.*"

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*W. Eliott*  
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